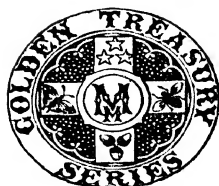


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SELECTIONS
FROM
COWPER'S POEMS



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WITH INTRODUCTION BY
MRS. OLIPHANT



London
MACMILLAN AND CO.

Printed by R. & R. CLARK, Edinburgh.

P R E F A C E.

THE fame of Cowper, like that of every other poet worthy to be reckoned among the foremost names of literature, has gone through various vicissitudes. The ups and downs of changing taste are indeed the tests of real reputation ; and it is only the names that re-emerge, with lustre changed, perhaps, but scarcely dimmed, from the cold shades of neglect and forgetfulness, that are worthy to be inscribed on the national roll as a lasting glory and honour to the language. There are many who enjoy a very agreeable reputation in their own day to whom this ordeal is fatal, and there are few things at once more humbling and more comical than the juxtaposition of names which now and then a critical generation will make, to its own confusion. Thus Shenstone and even Rowe have been in their day coupled with Shakespeare ; and Dante was once considered a rude and barbarous rhymster in the sublime presence of Lorenzo dei Medici. Cowper, who has no such rank, has, however, suffered like his greater brethren by the changes of popular feeling, and has gone out of fashion all the more completely for the temporary causes which at his outset added to his fame. There are almost always some adventitious circumstances to increase the due weight of poetic merit with the poet's contemporaries. The mere fact that they are contemporaries gives his generation an interest in him, besides the more true effect of a mind fashioned by the same influences, and probably moving in a line of thought harmonious with

their own. In this there is nothing that detracts from the common interest of mankind, but rather a charm and attraction additional, an individuality which gives character to the general. Shakespeare is true Elizabethan but he is still truer man ; and the large and noble atmosphere of a magnificent age adds something to, but never impairs, the humanity which we all share. Even Pope, the exponent of so much less heroic a period, loses but little from the fact that his ways of thinking and the very air he breathes are different from ours. And when the adventitious circumstances which enhance the poetry at its first bursting forth are personal, as in such a case as Byron's, the passing away of their temporary influence takes nothing from the true merit upon which every final verdict has to be founded. If we are not carried away by enthusiasm for the beautiful young peer and hero, we can still understand the state of mind of those who were so, and, though unimpressed ourselves, can comprehend sympathetically how his first readers were impressed. But Cowper is under the action of a different class of influences. The temporary advantage which enhanced his work to his generation was neither that of personal attractiveness nor of general harmony with his age. He represented, indeed, and afforded utterance to a large party in his age, binding willing fetters upon his gentle genius to make himself more and more its spokesman and exponent. His hope and ambition was to be the poet of religion—and that not of religion in the broadest sense, not of divine Christianity in its largeness and fulness, but of the special form of religion which a special revival of interest in sacred subjects at a moment of much profanity and vice had called forth. The faith, not even of Calvin, but of John Newton, represented Christianity to Cowper's eyes. He knew no kind of piety but that which was dictated by this form of doctrine, and he tutored himself to be its interpreter to the world which loved verse better than sermons. Immediately he had his reward ; he was admitted not only by the lovers of poetry into the sacred

circle of the poets ; but he was warmly hailed and adopted by the myriads who know nothing about literature, yet love above all things to have their own sentiments uttered for them in the language of verse. When it occurs to poetry to be placed beside his Bible by the devout reader's bedside, it has reached a height at which no critical standards have any sway. The writers who attain this eminence are seldom great ; they are usually devout hymnsters, authors of verses real enough to strike a responsive note in pious hearts, though without any value in art. But when by chance a true poet reaches this position, his fame, for the moment at least, is beyond measure. Keble, in our own generation, has reached it by the strength of an inspiration which is the same in its source but entirely different in its manifestation from that of Cowper ; and what poet has reached so suddenly and easily anything like the universal popularity of the *Christian Year* !

This, however, which adds so immensely to immediate appreciation, is bad for the future. Keble may not suffer ; he is so much less than Cowper in intrinsic merit, that if he loses this standing ground, no other will be left of appreciable magnitude, and he must go altogether if he fails at all ; but at the same time he is far safer than Cowper, insomuch as his is the romance of religion, with many picturesque elements in it, of Gothic architecture, and fine music, and beautiful ritual, besides its all-pervading devotion. Even were the faith of the Evangelical party to return again, as perhaps, after the long reign of free-thinking and over-liberality, it may do, the pious sentiment of Keble would still keep him afloat. But Cowper has little chance of gaining toleration either from the High Church or the indifferent world. For his religiousness is of a far more rigid kind. Though he can see, none better, the love of God in the smile of nature, and point out the innocent homage of creation to its Maker, yet he cannot permit us to join in that homage without a distinct profession of faith. He will allow no general statements, no vague

hopes, but will drive us to account for our belief before he will allow that we have any chance at all. He and his fellow-believers were in the position of being very sure of every tenet they held. Doubt to them was sin, to be sternly crushed upon the threshold of the mind, not gently encouraged and applauded as an almost virtue. The fires of hell blazed to them upon the very confines of this world, only to be escaped by a flight which, if not accomplished to-day, it might be too late to make to-morrow. The "fountain filled with blood drawn from Emmanuel's veins," which horrifies us now as with an image at once disgusting and profane, was to them a reverent and loving description of the chief object of faith. It is impossible to imagine a more complete change of phraseology and sentiment than that which has passed over even the section of the Church most near in its views to those entertained by Cowper. Everything has been relaxed, doctrine and statement, and the requirements of orthodoxy, and the practice of the devout. Those who are the very descendants of his teachers and leaders pass with a shudder over his denunciations, or explain them away on the ground of insanity and a mind unhinged. But there was no insanity in Cowper's doctrine, though in his personal application of it there might be much. Whitfield had preached the same; Newton enforced it in a world of fiery sermons; and Wilberforce reasoned with the world over it, with a logic that thousands found irresistible. It was the utterance of the highest religious earnestness of the time. We are not so earnest in anything nowadays as they were in their determination not to bate a word, not to soften a threat, to warn every man that his soul was forfeit, and that we must not lose a moment in fleeing from the wrath to come. We have lost much of the earnestness, perhaps something of the religion, in our tendency to soften every possible expression, and admit every gentler interpretation, and make the best of our case instead of the worst, as they thought it necessary to do.

It is this extraordinary change in the tone of religious thought which more than anything else has set Cowper at a disadvantage. Those descriptions of nature in which nobody has surpassed the gentle poet of Olney, and those delightful domestic scenes in which nobody has equalled him, can never cease to charm the candid reader. There is an absolute truth in these pictures, a daring adherence to what he sees, in which the timid poet shows an independence and boldness unknown not only in his own day, but even in the after-age, which, moulded unconsciously by his example, and by the breach of tradition which he accomplished, made plainness of language into a system, and threw off ostentatiously the bonds which poetry has always worn, the more exalted diction, the choice of high effects and avoidance of the ordinary which has been with her an article of faith. This faith Cowper abandoned even more entirely than his successor Wordsworth, who formulated the rebellion. Most people have forgotten, and Wordsworth altogether ignored, this precedent, partly in his intense and narrow vision remaining unconscious of his predecessor, his eyes being so closely fixed upon his own theory and so convinced of its originality that he was scarcely cognisant of what had been done before him. But Cowper's self-emancipation from the ornate words of ancient use and wont and the more elevated themes supposed to be essential to poetry was more complete even than Wordsworth's. He had no notion that his system was a new one, nor purpose of establishing a changed rule in the canons of poetry. Indeed his own poetic successes and fame have an accidental character altogether, as things which were never calculated upon in his own conception of his life, but stumbled into unawares in his endeavours to escape from the enemies of his peace. In this attempt he was not responsible to any critical tribunal, nor did he occupy his attention with any precedent. To keep his particular demons at bay, to fill up the languid hours of an idle life, was the declared motive of his great

poem, *The Task* ; and as it is chiefly upon this poem that his position as an original power in poetry is founded, we may confine our observations to that remarkable work. His position in it is quite individual and peculiar. It may be worth the reader's while to contrast it with that of Gray who went before him and Wordsworth who came after him.

There never was a more exquisite evening landscape than that which Gray has painted for us, in the dim and pensive tints that become the hour. The twilight painters who have now grown to a school, the English Mason, the French Corot, and so many more, have nothing that is equal to the soft waning of the light, the balmy dimness, the falling dews and shadows, the faint sounds of "parting day"—in this wonderful picture. True in every half tint to the hour and the scene, it is yet so suffused with the atmosphere of imagination and poetry that we might be content to choose it as a symbol of the indescribable and infinite difference between mere prose fact and poetical truth. It embodies not only the scene but the sentiment—the wistfulness, the sadness, the regret, which are the natural accompaniments in the heart of the end of day. It is sometimes supposed that it owes half its popularity to its subject, and Gray himself is reported, in a kind of anger with his own fame, to have said so—foolishly, we think ; as well resent the delight with which we look upon the work of a great painter, because, if he has done nobly, it is Nature we think of first and not the hand that has rendered her. It is very unlikely indeed that the ordinary observer placed in a country churchyard at the close of a summer day would think of the buried capabilities under these swellings of the turf. He would think of the wicked who cease from troubling and the weary who are at rest, and perhaps, if his soul was touched with tender association, with some thrill of awe and self-reflection, would remember that the "poor inhabitants below" had once been as himself, and that he too by and by would be as they. But to the poet there

occurs another thought : The day that is dead and has not brought what it might, the life which when it ends like the day will breathe away with a sense of incompleteness, still lingering upon the warm precincts of the cheerful day and casting a longing look behind, suggest to him the depths of finer meaning that are here buried in death and never have found expression at all. All those might-have-beens culminate to him in the thought of the mute inglorious Milton, the village Hampden, the poets who have never sung, the conquerors who have never fought. It is the most profound expression of the wistfulness of the hour, the pathos and regret, the unfulfilment, which gives to life its most prevailing sadness—although in its liquid smoothness and grace, we who are so wise take the poem with a kind of condescension, as a piece of melody and little more. But it is not a simple representation of nature. Gray is not limited to give us what he sees and no more. To Dante the same falling shadows and dying light, with the sound dropping through of the convent bell, the “curfew which tolls the knell of parting day,” the “squilla di lontano, che paia il giorno pianger che si more,” suggests the wistful voyagers at sea, who that day have bidden farewell to gentle friends. And here too the exquisite harmony of the idea with the scene penetrates all hearts. In both the landscape only moves us when it has got its human soul.

We need not enter with the same detail into the sentiment of Wordsworth, which everybody knows. His landscapes are all full of human feeling. The progress of life, the development of the austere and lofty virtues that harmonise with his mountains, the noble if sometimes strained philosophy with which he fits in evil and good to his scheme of the universe, mingle with every one of the many presentations of nature which it is his special office to set before us. He is never a painter merely, nor is it in any case only the landscape that his pencil draws. It is always instinct with morality and

sentiment, with the development of human feeling and the life of thought.

But Cowper stands before us in a gentle originality which is less profound indeed, but more simple, more disinterested than any of these. "The language of genuine poetry," says Mr. Matthew Arnold with a reference to Wordsworth's criticism of Dryden, "is the language of one composing with his eye on the object." The poets to whom we have referred did this, but they did something more—they had their eye on further visions, on spiritual objects shadowing forth beyond the real. Cowper is among them the only real landscape painter, whose eye seeks no other depths but that of the air about him, who is content with the horizon he sees, and paints us things as they are. Out of a world all rustling with mythologies, from which Gray only escapes by intervals, he walks, straight-forward and simple, into a scene which he will trick out in no adventitious interest. Of all men he was the one most concerned to put a moral to every word he wrote—it was no wish to banish humanity from his picture that moved him. Indeed, whenever a human figure comes in his way he puts it in with a realistic force that is delightful. It is perhaps more difficult to explain why we should be charmed by the picture of the woodman and his dog crossing the wintry landscape, than it is to understand the interest of the imagination in the suggestions of the *Elegy*, or the revelations of high human virtue, sorrow, or waywardness, which people Wordsworth's mountain glens and hamlets. Yet so it is. And Cowper was the first to institute this manner of composition in his age. His eye was always on the object. A recent critic makes the curious statement that Cowper was one of those who enforced the idea that society and not nature was the first object of study. This opinion may have taken its rise in those earlier productions in which his ambition was to play "the monitor's if not the poet's part," and enlighten mankind as to their best interests—but could

not be founded upon any knowledge of Cowper's greater work. Here nature is all in all—there is no *arrière pensée* in his descriptions and breezy broad landscapes. By times indeed he turns aside altogether and sermonises for pages together. But these are digressions from his subject. The landscapes of *The Task* are facsimiles of the landscapes before him, the objects which he had always under his eye. He put down what he found there with a minuteness and exactness in which no looker-on can be deceived. In those direct and sunbright pictures he seldom moralises, he seeks no aid of human sentiment. He paints what he sees with a fine instinct of all that is in the picture, with none of the hardness of a photograph, but with something of its unsparing fidelity, seeing everything. He had not the help of any philosophical theory as to the equality of all subjects, and the necessity of treating everything impartially in verse ; but he did it without the theory, and far more boldly than the theorist himself ever attempted to do. Who but Cowper has ever ventured to make immortal a dog—a dog not clothed in sentiment, not the emblem of fidelity, not enshrined in any dumb pathetic manifestation of love to man,—a mere fourfooted creature, in the energy of movement and life ?

“ Shaggy and lean and shrewd, with pointed ears,
And tail cropped short,—half lurcher and half cur,
His dog attends him. Close behind his heel
Now creeps he slow ; and now with many a frisk,
Wide scampering, snatches up the drifted snow
With ivory teeth, or ploughs it with his snout,
Then shakes his powder'd coat and barks for joy.”

A child would laugh with pleasure at this description—and when we read it it gives us a distinct sense of gratification, of recognition, of kindly sympathy ; and yet there is no approach to human sentiment in it, nothing but a reproduction of what was under his eyes. The frosty landscape comes all before us, with the ring of this bark of joy in its thin and nipping air. We smell

the woodman's tobacco which he adjusts "with pressure of his thumb," as he goes forth "unconcerned," crossing our way. These are not sublime images, nor do they demand the aid of splendid diction. They are so real that they ought to be prosaic, matter-of-fact, unpoetical. But they are not unpoetical, they are immortal. Nothing can push that barking cur out of literature, except the collapse of literature altogether. After a hundred years we are still exhilarated by his aimless delight as he ploughs up the snow—and watch his master going out to his work as if it had been yesterday, with the friendliest toleration of "the short tube that fumes beneath his nose." To define exactly how it is that this picture so charms us would be a delicate task for any critic. It is easy enough to explain the fascination of the *Elegy*; and the deserted hut of Margaret in the *Excursion*, or the light shining in the cottage window over a whole glen in love and patience, to guide a wanderer home—"which shepherds call the evening star"—touch a chord which responds on the moment. But the charm of the other is at once more subtle and more simple—a delight in reality, in the permanence of a picture which has pleased us by moments, and taken us out of ourselves—in the long faithfulness of the world to the same everyday incidents and innocent sensations. Are these the causes of our pleasure? We cannot account for it in any other way.

Cowper pushed this experiment of his upon human interest very far. It was no experiment so far as his consciousness was concerned. He saw all the minutiae of the landscape with eyes full of humorous and genial observation, beguiled out of his own miseries by the sight, the air, the distance, the rural sounds; even the strange show of his own shadow "splindling into longitude immense," the few rare rustic figures passing by, gave him a faint yet perfect pleasure, a grateful sense of relief. So long as he was out of doors and his thoughts thus withdrawn from himself, he found existence a possibility. This and not any idea of what was permissible in poetry

was his meaning. He had tried their effect doubly upon himself before he tried it upon his readers ; and there was nothing meretricious about that effect, nothing untrue : it was altogether genuine, natural, unforced, with no false elements in it. His picture gallery extends as we accompany him on, but always continues in the same level. He condescends to no fiction, no subliming influences. Here comes trudging through the night the waggoner, "in pond'rous boots beside his steaming team," the waggon, a moving hill of snow, the horses with wide-expanded nostrils : and he with "half-shut eyes, and puckered cheeks, and teeth presented bare against the storm ;" or we watch the cottage child going home through the twilight with one small candle "dangled along at the cold finger's end ;" or bolder picture still, the thievish sparrows fluttering about the highroad, "lean pensioners upon the traveller's track ;" while among the woods—

" The redbreast warbles still, but is content
With slender notes and more than half suppressed,
Pleased with his solitude, and flitting light
From spray to spray ; where'er he rests he shakes
From many a twig the pendant drops of ice,
That tinkle in the withered leaves below."

How simple are all these descriptions, how devoid of every foreign charm ! Neither story nor sentiment is in them—no reflection of the poet's mood nor invitation to the reader's fancy : yet something so wholesome and fresh in its living reality, that though the effect may not be so lofty as when our souls are stirred, it is almost more good, more refreshing, a more sensible advantage and relief. Nature is exquisite in every page, not tricked out in human imaginations, but sober-sweet in her own everlasting calm. This was what healed the troubled spirit of the writer himself when works and ways of men were all distasteful to him, and everything out of joint. From the very directness of the effect upon himself he seems to bring the power of that faithful, tender

portraiture which has all the unity and completeness of a picture without any disturbing reflection of man or his emotions in it. The art is a very rare one. There is nothing strained, nothing extravagant in it ; all is toned to the very accent of Nature, her moderation, her fidelity, her freshness, and calm. Nor is there anything in the subject itself to heighten feeling. It has neither mountains nor oceans, no exciting magnitude or grandeur, no glory of tropical sunshine or dazzling colour of the South. The country which breathes about us so fresh and dewy is the homeliest English country—flat fields, and hedgerows, and slow-flowing rivers—

“ Here Ouse, slow winding through a level plain
Of spacious meads, with cattle sprinkled o’er,
Conducts the eye along his sinuous course ;

While far beyond, and overthwart the stream
That as with molten glass inlays the vale,
The sloping land recedes into the clouds,
Displaying on its varied side the grace
Of hedgerows’ beauties numberless, square tower,
Tall spire—from which the sound of cheerful bells
Just modulates upon the listening ear,—
Groves, heaths, and smoking villages remote.”

We have specially lingered upon this characteristic of Cowper’s genius, since it is in our opinion almost the most remarkable of his gifts. No change of sentiment can ever make those landscapes old-fashioned, or take from them their balm and sweetness. These genuine transcripts of Nature have a similar effect upon the mind that Nature herself has when we plunge into her sweet and fresh and cool recesses. Their influence is always wholesome, restoring, purifying ; and they are very nearly, if not altogether, unique in their extraordinary simplicity and truth.

This is not to say that Cowper banishes himself from the panorama of his surrounding fields and pastures. On the contrary, his personality is everywhere, and his

reflections upon all subjects break in continually, flowing into monologue, into endless exhortations and addresses to the world. It is himself and his thinkings, his opinions on all subjects, his moral indignations and religious fervours, that occupy the poem, sometimes wearying our minds and sometimes arresting our sympathies. This being the case, it is almost more remarkable that he should be able to leave himself out when he comes to the landscape, and furnish us with so many delightful scenes apart from the personality of the much-reasoning, often polemical being who fills the remainder of the space. The reader will see by the autobiographical arrangement we have attempted to make how entirely *The Task* is Cowper. But Olney is not Cowper, nor the banks of Ouse, nor all those snowy, frosty brightnesses of his winter walks. The distinction thus made is very unusual and perfect in its way.

And if his landscapes are so worthy of attention, what shall we say of the domestic scenes which are so entirely his own? The fireside, that institution which we have all prided ourselves upon as so distinctively and exclusively English, may be said to be in its literary form Cowper's invention. He is the apostle of domestic life. He is the first poet to whom the household board, the kindly warmth of the household hearth, the social fellowship of the little family circle, has given inspiration. Calm affection, gentle talk, feminine occupations, the tranquillity which suits a sober age and chastened life, the reflective enjoyments of a mind detached from the world, all warmed and soothed by that comfort which is a British deity and household god, have found in him their exponent, their laureate, almost their founder, so far as the appreciation of mankind is concerned. It is not, it may be said, an exalted ideal of existence; but perhaps there is no image and realisation of life which has so much encouraged everyday happiness, and done so much for the solace of those classes who are least considered in the world, as this gentle parlour, with its

drawn curtains and cheerful fire, which Cowper has made into one of the representative scenes of English life : and there is no one that has more entered into the consciousness of mankind. The *salon*, brilliant with wit and beauty, with fine company and great names, where the art of conversation is carried to its highest triumphs, and everything glows and glitters, is a French and not an English ideal. The fireside is our insular shrine of happiness. Its atmosphere has coloured the mind, the very imagination of the country. The sense of what could be discussed there, of the subjects that were possible, the scenes that were in keeping with the tranquillity of the domestic tribunal, has had an effect which probably nothing else could have had in keeping our literature purer, our moral standard higher ; and it has raised incalculably that lower level of happiness which seldom, perhaps, reaches any triumphant tide, but which makes life endurable to a countless multitude who have none of its prizes within their reach. It is to Cowper that we owe it if this domestic life, so often scorned by those who are the spokesmen of the race, unnecessary to those whose vitality is at its highest flood, has been received amid the modes of existence best known to the world, associated everywhere with the English name, and recognised not only as worthy of all respect, but as full of charm, refinement, and a delicate kind of pleasure. To say that recent generations have been less amenable to its gentle rule, that the ideal has somewhat palled upon us, and that, in our profound experience of those defects which are inseparable from every human advantage, we are less sure of the supreme superiority of the fireside than we were at the beginning of this century, is another matter. It would perhaps be wiser to say that the ideal has descended lower down, that perhaps it never was the ideal of the highest class of English society, and that now—when that highest class is indefinitely enlarged, and many of us, once well contented to be of the middle rank, as Cowper, and the Unwins, and all their society

felt themselves to be, claim the honours of a loftier social sphere—we leave our old love for the institution behind us. But this need not diminish the gratitude with which an innumerable multitude, still finding their best happiness in, and owing their tenderest recollections to, the scenes of English domesticity, should contemplate the poet whose parlour at Olney commemorated a new type of wellbeing, an enchanting picture of innocent living and mutual consolation, for the instruction of the world. The entire scene with which he begins *The Winter Evening* is obsolete in its circumstances. The postboy blowing his horn as he crosses the bridge—"the herald of a noisy world"—

"With spatter'd boots, strapp'd waist, and frozen locks,
News from all nations lumb'ring at his back,"

is as much out of date as the recluse behind his warm, drawn curtains, waiting for the one poor newspaper which is to show him through the loopholes of retreat a glimpse of the noisy world. We look forward with no such stir of pleasant excitement to our evening paper, which will repeat to us the news of the morning, with half a grain of apocryphal information added thereto; or to the postman going his round, who has already knocked at our door three or four times at least in the course of the day. It is all old-fashioned and ended—a picture of the past. But it is a picture which has entered into national history and universal knowledge, and will never be dissociated from the English name—

"I crown thee king of intimate delights,
Fireside enjoyments, homeborn happiness,
And all the comforts that the lowly roof
Of undisturbed Retirement, and the hours
Of long, uninterrupted evening know."

In these remarks we have confined ourselves entirely to *The Task*—the greatest work of Cowper's life, and his most individual and characteristic contribution to poetical

literature. We have ventured to describe it elsewhere as having had a large share in one of the new beginnings of literature, and opening a distinct chapter in English poetical history. His earlier works all belong to a previous age in poetry, concluding one era as *The Task* begins another. From these productions we have taken various passages, which are not unworthy of a place among the best of the period to which they belong. The "Portraits and Characters" do not indeed scathe and burn like those of Pope, or hand down a well-defined and recognisable person to everlasting infamy. Their judgments are milder, as their style is less brilliant. But Pope was the king of that manner and period, as Cowper was of his own and later age, and could no more have taken Cowper's walk in the snow than Cowper could have blasted Atticus. Yet our poet, we allow, was always full of prejudice. The enemies of his faith were all black to him, the offenders against his sense of what was holy and true without any redeeming quality. He was one of those who, believing little harm of those they know, make up for this sweet, instinctive charity by damning with a cordial faith those who, being unknown, may be as bad as anybody pleases. The contrast between Voltaire and the cottager, which everybody knows, is a fine instance of straightforward and unhesitating decision in this respect: whereas such a doubtful figure as that of the poet Churchill has all the excuses that tenderness can make for him.

Of Cowper's hymns we have quoted few, and these rather because the collection would have been incomplete without them than for any love of the verses themselves. They belong to the darkest period of his life. They express none of those simpler religious sentiments which are the best inspiration of the hymn-writer—and illustrate the filial and tender side of piety. One of the same collection written by Newton, whose poetical gift was very far inferior—"How sweet the name of Jesus sounds"—is still a favourite in all churches. But Cow-

per rarely touched this sweeter note. His hymns are doctrinal—statements of faith rather than conceptions of praise. It is true that we still find “God moves in a mysterious way” in most collections, and that even the “Fountain filled with blood” still finds a place amid the familiar utterances of piety : but we cannot think the latter is often used by any congregation of worshipping people in these days. Hymn-writing is a faculty by itself. It is curious that Cowper, whose heart was so profoundly moved by sacred subjects, should not have succeeded in this kind of composition. He had the devotion, he had the poetry, but he does not seem to have had the knack of wedding them together. Even out of his despondency and of the deep despair which fell over him so often like a cloud of darkness, there is no such cry of appeal or misery, as might give utterance to other breaking hearts. The *Castaway* is the only one of his poems in which this profound and awful sentiment is embodied with force and fitness ; and that is a composition of a totally different kind. Some of the verses which at a later period his good-nature furnished to the parish-clerk for the adornment of the bills of mortality are fine ; but even among these there is not one that reaches the highest level. The best is perhaps that which portrays the indifference to death and all cognate subjects of the ordinary intelligence—

“ He that sits from day to day
Where the prison'd lark is hung,
Heedless of his loudest lay,
Scarcely knows that he has sung.”

This is not profound or remarkable, but it returns to the ear, and is a graceful expression of a sufficiently easy sentiment. But there is nothing of Cowper's in this way that will rise naturally to the lips of simple worshippers, or be breathed by the voices of children round their mother's knee. It is evident that he had not the secret of this manner of song.

But curiously enough this religious dreamer—this despairing soul, overpowered by the sense of judgment to come, and finding no gleam of light anywhere, wherever he turned—had eminently the secret of another kind of writing, of a nature as foreign to the habitual strain of his thoughts as can be conceived. His humorous works are among the most complete of his successes. It is doubtful if a poem so entirely satisfactory and perfect for its purpose in every line as *John Gilpin* was ever written. It is long, but not a line too long; nor is there a false image or unnecessary word in it. The purely comic situation, the delightful heightening of every detail, the good-humoured self-recovery of the hero, with his “pleasant wit,” and the natural, simple fun of his repeated calamities, from which, notwithstanding, he emerges, to our delight, noway harmed, and with a possibility of again “riding abroad,” which leaves us full of glee—are all so easy, unforced, gay, and natural, that there is no drawback or abatement upon the pleasure. The story of its origin is well known. How Lady Austin told him the tale in one of his moods of darkness, with all the genial humour that made her society invaluable to him—how he could not sleep for laughter all night through, and in the morning presented her with her story turned in the way that has made it permanent. Afterwards he “hated himself for having written it” by times: but even then was not deluded enough to be unconscious of its merit. It is said to have attracted no particular attention at first, being published in a newspaper of no great pretensions, but afterwards came to light and flew into unusual fame. The story of the titling time in the country, the farmers who were so coarse, and the parson who was so fine, is almost more humorous than *John Gilpin*. We have here a group instead of the single figure of the immortal horseman; and the fine incongruity, the ludicrous distress, the whimsical conjunction altogether, is touched with inimitable lightness and gaiety. It is strange to use such

words in reference to so melancholy a figure as that of the invalid recluse sinking deeper and deeper, year by year, into gloom and suffering : but it is stranger still that it should be true, and that while he had little skill in expressing the deepest religious emotions of his soul in such verse as other adoring or suffering spirits could employ after him, he had the keenest perception of the fun, and the readiest faculty for embodying it. In nothing he attempts is he more happy. One would say he was here in his element, and that no mode of expression was so natural and easy to him.

In the following selection a number of short poems and extracts have been so placed together as to form a sort of autobiography of the poet. Beginning with his careless youth, and the first slight and faulty verses in which young William lightly tells the first awakening of youthful emotions within him, the reader will here be able to trace him through the vague and sad episode of his love story, and the sudden break of harsh madness and despair which rent his life asunder : through the varied but calmer course of his middle age, interrupted by so many convulsions, yet including so many tranquil scenes and sober pleasures,—till it ends at last in a despair more still and hopeless, in his Mary's helpless decay, and the symbol of the castaway sailor living a lifetime in an hour "in ocean self-upheld." This arrangement has the effect, indeed, of separating several passages, especially from *The Task*, from their original setting ; but in no case, we think, will the passages quoted be impaired by being placed in another sequence and made to interpret, which they do more truly than anything else can, the story of Cowper's life.

CONTENTS.

	PAGE
PREFACE	v

AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL.

Of Himself	3
To Delia	4
Lovers' Quarrels	6
The Symptoms of Love	8
Separation	9
On the Death of Sir W. Russell	10
From an Epistle to Robert Lloyd, Esq.	11
On the Receipt of my Mother's Picture out of Norfolk	12
Lines written under the Influence of Delirium	16
Some Account of Himself	17
His Occupations	19
Love of Nature	20
Reverie	22
Rural Scenes	23
Winter Evening	25
Reading	26
His Hare	30
Peace	30
A Poetical Epistle to Lady Austen	31
The Valediction	35
To the Rev. Mr. Newton	38
To the Nightingale	39
To Mrs. Unwin	40

	PAGE
The Shrubby	40
To William Hayley, Esq.	41
To Mary	42
The Castaway	44

DESCRIPTIVE.

A Landscape	49
Spring	52
The Effect of Natural Beauty	55
Evening	57
Winter : The First Snow	58
The Poor in Winter	59
The Winter Morning	61
The Barnyard	63
A Bright Day in Winter	63
The Lesson of the Stars	65

POLITICAL.

The Miseries of Kings	69
British Freedom	70
The Patriot and the Martyr	73
The Bastille	76
True Loyalty	78
Patriotism	79
Against Slavery	81
The South Sea Islander	85
Pity for Poor Africans	87
The Morning Dream	88

PORTRAITS AND CHARACTERS.

The King	93
The Statesman	94
The Soldier	94
The Poet	95
The Man of the World	96
The Prude	96
The Philosopher and Peasant	98

CONTENTS.

xxvii

	PAGE
The Religious Reformer	99
The Christian	100
The Philanthropist	101
The Weary Statesman	102
The Lover	105
Clergymen Good and Bad	107
The Recluse	109
The Man of Fashion	111
The Hypochondriac	112
A Scholar	113
The Recruit	114
Musicians and the Fiddling Parson	115
Sportsman and Hunting Priests	117
The Travelled Youth	118
Religious Discussions—Sir Smug	120
Talkers of various Classes	122
The Schoolboy	128
The Wise Tutor	130
The Injudicious Parent	131
Recollections of Childhood	132

POEMS ON RELIGIOUS SUBJECTS.

Conversion	137
God in Nature	139
Divine Revival in Nature	141
The Journey to Emmaus	142
Religion in Rural Life	144
The Restoration of all Things	147
Walking with God	151
Jehovah-Nissi	152
The Contrite Heart	153
Lovest Thou Me?	154
Retirement	155
Grace and Providence	156
The Waiting Soul	157
Light shining out of Darkness	158
Human Frailty	159
Stanzas subjoined to the Yearly Bill of Mortality of the Parish of All Saints, Northampton ; for the year 1787	160
On a similar Occasion, for the year 1790	161
On a similar Occasion, for the year 1793	163

POEMS HUMOROUS AND PLAYFUL.

	PAGE
The Diverting History of John Gilpin	167
Ode to Apollo	176
The Yearly Distress ; or, Tithing-Time at Stock, in Essex	177
The Distressed Travellers ; or, Labour in Vain	180
Address to Tobacco	183
Report of an Adjudged Case	184
The Colubriad	186
The Dog and the Water Lily	187
On a Spaniel, called "Beau," killing a Young Bird	189
Epitaph on a Hare	191
Epitaphium Alterum	193
Pairing Time Anticipated	193
An Epitaph	196
A Tale	197
The Faithful Bird	200
The Nightingale and Glowworm	201

MISCELLANEOUS.

The Progress of Poetry	205
Poetic Inspiration	208
An Epistle to Joseph Hill	210
To the Rev. William Cawthorne Unwin	212
Verses to the Memory of Dr. Lloyd, of Westminster School	213
On the Promotion of Edward Thurlow, Esq., to the Lord High Chancellorship of England	214
To Warren Hastings, Esq.	215
Sonnet to William Wilberforce, Esq.	216
Lines composed for a Memorial of Ashley Cowper, Esq.	217
Sonnet addressed to Henry Cowper, Esq.	218
Epitaph on Dr. Johnson	219
On the Loss of the Royal George	219
On observing some Names of little Note recorded in the "Biographia Britannica"	221
The Rose	221
The Poplar Field	222
Boadicea	223
Yardley Oak	225

AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL.

OF HIMSELF.

WILLIAM was once a bashful youth ;
His modesty was such,
That one might say (to say the truth),
He rather had too much.

Some said that it was want of sense,
And others, want of spirit
(So blest a thing is impudence),
While others could not bear it.

But some a different notion had,
And at each other winking,
Observed that though he little said,
He paid it off with thinking.

Howe'er, it happened, by degrees,
He mended and grew perter ;
In company was more at ease,
And dressed a little smarter ;

Nay, now and then would look quite gay,
As other people do ;
And sometimes said, or tried to say,
A witty thing or so.

AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL.

He eyed the women, and made free
To comment on their shapes ;
So that there was, or seemed to be
No fear of a relapse.

The women said, who thought him rough,
But now no longer foolish,
The creature may do well enough,
But wants a deal of polish."

At length, improved from head to heel,
'Twere scarce too much to say,
No dancing bear was so genteel,
Or half so *dégage*.

Now that a miracle so strange
May not in vain be shown
Let the dear maid who wrought the change
E'en claim him for her own.

TO DELIA.

WHY HE ASKED FOR A LOCK OF HER HAIR.

DELIA, the unkindest girl on earth,
When I besought the fair,
That favour of intrinsic worth,
A ringlet of her hair,

Refused that instant to comply
 With my absurd request,
 For reasons she could specify,
 Some twenty score at least.

Trust me, my dear, however odd
 It may appear to say,
 I sought it merely to defraud
 Thy spoiler of his prey.

Yes ! when its sister locks shall fade,
 As quickly fade they must,
 When all their beauties are decayed,
 Their gloss, their colour, lost—

Ah then ! if haply to my share
 Some slender pittance fall,
 If I but gain one single hair,
 Nor age usurp them all ;—

When you behold it still as sleek,
 As lovely to the view,
 As when it left thy snowy neck,—
 That Eden where it grew,—

Then shall my Delia's self declare
 That I professed the truth,
 And have preserved my little share
 In everlasting youth.

LOVERS QUARRELS.

THIS evening, Delia, you and I
Have managed most delightfully,
For with a frown we parted ;
Having contrived some trifle that
We both may be much troubled at,
And sadly disconcerted.

Yet well as each performed their part,
We might perceive it was but art ;
And that we both intended
To sacrifice a little ease ;
For all such petty flaws as these
Are made but to be mended.

You knew, dissembler ! all the while,
How sweet it was to reconcile
After this heavy pelt ;
That we should gain by this allay
When next we met, and laugh away
The care we never felt.

Happy ! when we but seek to endure
A little pain, then find a cure
By double joy required ;
For friendship, like a severed bone,
Improves and gains a stronger tone
When aptly reunited.

THINK, Delia, with what cruel haste
 Our fleeting pleasures move,
 Nor heedless thus in sorrow waste
 The moments due to love ;

Be wise, my fair, and gently treat
 These few that are our friends ;
 Think, thus abused, what sad regret
 Their speedy flight attends !

Sure in those eyes I love so well,
 And wished so long to see,
 Anger I thought could never dwell,
 Or anger aimed at me.

No bold offence of mine I knew
 Should e'er provoke your hate ;
 And, early taught to think you true,
 Still hoped a gentler fate.

With kindness bless the present hour,
 Or oh ! we meet in vain !
 What can we do in absence more
 Than suffer and complain ?

Fated to ills beyond redress,
 We must endure our woe ;
 The days allowed us to possess,
 'Tis madness to forego.

THE SYMPTOMS OF LOVE.

WOULD my Delia know if I love, let her take
My last thought at night, and the first when I wake ;
When my prayers and best wishes preferr'd for her sake.

Let her guess what I muse on, when rambling alone
I stride o'er the stubble each day with my gun,
Never ready to shoot till the covey is flown.

Let her think what odd whimsies I have in my brain,
When I read one page over and over again,
And discover at last that I read it in vain.

Let her say why so fix'd and so steady my look,
Without ever regarding the person who spoke,
Still affecting to laugh, without hearing the joke.

Or why, when with pleasure her praises I hear
(That sweetest of melody sure to my ear),
I attend, and at once inattentive appear.

And lastly, when summon'd to drink to my flame,
Let her guess why I never once mention her name,
Though herself and the woman I love are the same.

SEPARATION.

How oft, my Delia, since our last farewell
 (Years that have rolled since that distressful hour),
 Grieved I have said, when most our hopes prevail,
 Our promised happiness is least secure.

Had you, my love, forbade me to pursue
 My fond attempt ; disdainfully retired,
 And with proud scorn compelled me to subdue
 The ill-fated passion by yourself inspired ;

Then haply to some distant spot removed,
 Hopeless to gain, unwilling to molest
 With fond entreaties whom I dearly loved,
 Despair or absence had redeemed my rest.

But now, sole partner in my Delia's heart,
 Yet doomed far off in exile to complain,
 Eternal absence cannot ease my smart,
 And Hope subsists but to prolong my pain.

Oh then, kind Heaven, be this my latest breath !
 Here end my life, or make it worth my care ;
 Absence from whom we love is worse than death,
 And frustrate hope severer than despair.

ON THE DEATH OF SIR W. RUSSELL.

WRITTEN AFTER THE LAST MEETING BETWEEN COWPER
AND HIS COUSIN,

DOOMED, as I am, in solitude to waste
The present moments, and regret the past ;
Deprived of every joy I valued most,
My friend torn from me, and my mistress lost,
Call not this gloom I wear, this anxious mien
The dull effect of humour, or of spleen !
Still, still I mourn, with each returning day,
Him snatch'd by fate in early youth away ;
And her—through tedious years of doubt and pain,
Fix'd in her choice, and faithful—but in vain !
Oh prone to pity, generous, and sincere,
Whose eye ne'er yet refused the wretch a tear ;
Whose heart the real claim of friendship knows,
Nor thinks a lover's are but fancied woes ;
See me—ere yet my destined course half done,
Cast forth a wanderer on a world unknown !
See me neglected on the world's rude coast,
Each dear companion of my voyage lost !
Nor ask why clouds of sorrow shade my brow,
And ready tears wait only leave to flow !
Why all that soothes a heart from anguish free,
And that delights the happy—palls with me !

FROM AN EPISTLE TO ROBERT
LLOYD, ESQ.

'Tis not that I design to rob
Thee of thy birthright, gentle Bob,
For thou art born sole heir and single
Of dear Mat Prior's easy jingle ;
Nor that I mean, while thus I knit
My threadbare sentiments together,
To show my genius or my wit,
When God and you know I have neither ;
Or such, as might be better shown
By letting poetry alone.

'Tis not with either of these views
That I presume to address the Muse :
But to divert a fierce banditti
(Sworn foes to every thing that's witty),
'That, with a black infernal train,
Make cruel inroads in my brain,
And daily threaten to drive thence
My little garrison of sense :
The fierce banditti which I mean,
Are gloomy thoughts led on by Spleen.
Then there's another reason yet,
Which is, that I may fairly quit
The debt which justly became due
The moment when I heard from you :
And you might grumble, crony mine,
If paid in any other coin ;
Since twenty sheets of lead, God knows,
(I would say twenty sheets of prose,)
Can ne'er be deemed worth half so much
As one of gold, and yours was such.

ON THE RECEIPT OF MY MOTHER'S
PICTURE OUT OF NORFOLK ;

THE GIFT OF MY COUSIN, ANN BODHAM.

OH that those lips had language ! Life has passed
With me but roughly since I heard thee last.
Those lips are thine—thy own sweet smile I see,
The same that oft in childhood solaced me ;
Voice only fails, else how distinct they say,
Grieve not, my child, chase all thy fears away !"
The meek intelligence of those dear eyes
(Blessed be the art that can immortalise,
The art that baffles Time's tyrannic claim
To quench it) here shines on me still the same.

Faithful remembrancer of one so dear,
O welcome guest, though unexpected here !
Who bidst me honour with an artless song,
Affectionate, a mother lost so long,
I will obey, not willingly alone,
But gladly, as the precept were her own :
And, while that face renews my filial grief,
Fancy shall weave a charm for my relief,
Shall steep me in Elysian reverie,
A momentary dream that thou art she.

My mother ! when I learnt that thou wast dead,
Say, wast thou conscious of the tears I shed ?
Hovered thy spirit o'er thy sorrowing son,
Wretch even then, life's journey just begun ?
Perhaps thou gavest me, though unfelt, a kiss :
Perhaps a tear, if souls can weep in bliss—

Ah, that maternal smile ! It answers—Yes.
 I heard the bell tolled on thy burial day,
 I saw the hearse that bore thee slow away,
 And, turning from my nursery window, drew
 A long, long sigh, and wept a last adieu !
 But was it such?—It was.—Where thou art gone
 Adieus and farewells are a sound unknown.
 May I but meet thee on that peaceful shore,
 The parting word shall pass my lips no more !
 Thy maidens, grieved themselves at my concern,
 Oft gave me promise of thy quick return.
 What ardently I wished I long believed,
 And, disappointed still, was still deceived.
 By expectation every day beguiled,
 Dupe of *to-morrow* even from a child.
 Thus many a sad to-morrow came and went,
 Till, all my stock of infant sorrow spent,
 I learnt at last submission to my lot ;
 But, though I less deplored thee, ne'er forgot.

Where once we dwelt our name is heard no more,
 Children not thine have trod my nursery floor ;
 And where the gardener Robin, day by day,
 Drew me to school along the public way,
 Delighted with my bauble coach, and wrapped
 In scarlet mantle warm, and velvet capped,
 'Tis now become a history little known,
 That once we called the pastoral house our own.
 Short-lived possession ! but the record fair
 That memory keeps, of all thy kindness there,
 Still outlives many a storm that has effaced
 A thousand other themes less deeply traced.
 Thy nightly visits to my chamber made,
 That thou mightst know me safe and warmly laid ;
 Thy morning bounties ere I left my home,
 The biscuit, or confectionary plum ;

The fragrant waters on my cheek bestowed
By thy own hand, till fresh they shone and glowed ;
All this, and more endearing still than all,
Thy constant flow of love, that knew no fall,
Ne'er roughened by those cataracts and brakes
That humour interposed too often makes :
All this still legible in memory's page,
And still to be so to my latest age,
Adds joy to duty, makes me glad to pay
Such honours to thee as my numbers may :
Perhaps a frail memorial, but sincere,
Not scorned in heaven, though little noticed here.

Could Time, his flight reversed, restore the hours,
When playing with thy vesture's tissued flowers,
The violet, the pink, and jessamine,
I pricked them into paper with a pin
(And thou wast happier than myself the while,
Wouldst softly speak, and stroke my head and smile),
Could those few pleasant days again appear,
Might one wish bring them, would I wish them here ?
I would not trust my heart ;—the dear delight
Seems so to be desired, perhaps I might.—
But no—what here we call our life is such,
So little to be loved, and thou so much,
That I should ill requite thee to constrain
Thy unbound spirit into bonds again.

Thou, as a gallant bark from Albion's coast
(The storms all weather'd and the ocean cross'd)
Shoots into port at some well-haven'd isle,
Where spices breathe, and brighter seasons smile,
There sits quiescent on the floods, that show
Her beauteous form reflected clear below,
While airs impregnated with incense play
Around her, fanning light her streamers gay ;
So thou, with sails how swift ! hast reach'd the shore,

' Where tempests never beat nor billows roar ;"
 And thy loved consort on the dangerous tide
 Of life long since has anchor'd by thy side.
 But me, scarce hoping to attain that rest,
 Always from port withheld, always distress'd,—
 Me howling blasts drive devious, tempest-toss'd,
 Sails ripp'd, seams opening wide, and compass lost,
 And day by day some current's thwarting force
 Sets me more distant from a prosperous course.
 Yet, oh, the thought that thou art safe, and he !
 That thought is joy, arrive what may to me.
 My boast is not that I deduce my birth
 From loins enthroned, and rulers of the earth ;
 But higher far my proud pretensions rise,—
 The son of parents pass'd into the skies.
 And now, farewell !—Time unrevok'd has run
 His wonted course, yet what I wish'd is done.
 By contemplation's help, not sought in vain,
 I seem to have lived my childhood o'er again ;
 To have renew'd the joys that once were mine,
 Without the sin of violating thine ;
 And, while the wings of fancy still are free,
 And I can view this mimic show of thee,
 Time has but half succeeded in his theft,
 Thyself removed, thy power to soothe me left.

LINES WRITTEN UNDER THE
INFLUENCE OF DELIRIUM.

HATRED and vengeance,—my eternal portion
Scarce can endure delay of execution,—
Wait with impatient readiness to seize my
Soul in a moment.

Damned below Judas ; more abhorred than he was,
Who for a few pence sold his holy Master !
Twice-betrayed Jesus me, the last delinquent,
Deems the profanest.

Man disavows, and Deity disowns me,
Hell might afford my miseries a shelter ;
Therefore, Hell keeps her ever-hungry mouths all
Bolted against me.

Hard lot ! encompassed with a thousand dangers ;
Weary, faint, trembling with a thousand terrors,
I'm called, if vanquished ! to receive a sentence
Worse than Abiram's.

Him the vindictive rod of angry Justice
Sent quick and howling to the centre headlong ;
I, fed with judgment, in a fleshly tomb, am
Buried above ground.

SOME ACCOUNT OF HIMSELF

I WAS a stricken deer that left the herd
 Long since ; with many an arrow deep infixed
 My panting side was charged, when I withdrew
 To seek a tranquil death in distant shades.
 There was I found by One who had Himself
 Been hurt by the archers. In His side He bore,
 And in His hands and feet, the cruel scars.
 With gentle force soliciting the darts,
 He drew them forth, and healed and bade me live.
 Since then, with few associates, in remote
 And silent woods I wander, far from those
 My former partners of the peopled scene ;
 With few associates, and not wishing more.
 Here much I ruminate, as much I may,
 With other views of men and manners now
 Than once, and others of a life to come.
 I see that all are wanderers, gone astray
 Each in his own delusions ; they are lost
 In chase of fancied happiness, still wooed
 And never won. Dream after dream ensues,
 And still they dream that they shall still succeed,
 And still are disappointed. Rings the world
 With the vain stir. I sum up half mankind,
 And add two-thirds of the remaining half,
 And find the total of their hopes and fears
 Dreams, empty dreams. The million flit as gay
 As if created only like the fly
 That spreads his motley wings in the eye of noon,
 To sport their season, and be seen no more.

The rest are sober dreamers, grave and wise,
And pregnant with discoveries new and rare.

‘Twere well, says one sage erudite, profound,
Terribly arch’d and aquiline his nose,
And overbuilt with most impending brows—
“ ‘Twere well, could you permit the world to live
As the world pleases. What’s the world to you?”
Much. I was born of woman, and drew milk,
As sweet as charity, from human breasts.
I think, articulate, I laugh and weep,
And exercise all functions of a man.
How then should I and any man that lives
Be strangers to each other? Pierce my vein,
Take of the crimson stream meandering there,
And catechise it well. Apply thy glass,
Search it, and prove now if it be not blood
Congenial with thine own : and if it be,
What edge of subtlety canst thou suppose
Keen enough, wise and skilful as thou art,
To cut the link of brotherhood, by which
One common Maker bound me to the kind?
True ; I am no proficient, I confess,
In arts like yours. I cannot call the swift
And perilous lightnings from the angry clouds,
And bid them hide themselves in earth beneath ;

Such powers I boast not—neither can I rest
A silent witness of the headlong rage
Or heedless folly by which thousands die,
Bone of my bone, and kindred souls to mine.

The Task, Book III.

HIS OCCUPATIONS.

How various his employments whom the world
 Calls idle, and who justly in return
 Esteems that busy world an idler too !
 Friends, books, a garden, and perhaps his pen,
 Delightful industry enjoyed at home,
 And Nature in her cultivated trim
 Dressed to his taste, inviting him abroad—
 Can he want occupation who has these?
 Will he be idle who has much to enjoy?
 Me, therefore, studious of laborious ease,
 Not slothful, happy to deceive the time
 Not waste it, and aware that human life
 Is but a loan to be repaid with use,
 When He shall call His debtors to account,
 From whom are all our blessings, business finds
 Even here ; while sedulous I seek to improve,
 At least neglect not, or leave unemployed,
 The mind He gave me ; driving it, though slack
 Too oft, and much impeded in its work
 By causes not to be divulged in vain,
 To its just point—the service of mankind.
 He that attends to his interior self,—
 That has a heart and keeps it,—has a mind
 That hungers and supplies it,—and who seeks
 A social, not a dissipated life,—
 Has business ; feels himself engaged to achieve
 No unimportant, though a silent task.

The morning finds the self-sequestered man
 Fresh for his task, intend what task he may.

Whether inclement seasons recommend
His warm but simple home, where he enjoys,
With her who shares his pleasures and his heart,
Sweet converse, sipping calm the fragrant lymph
Which neatly she prepares ; then to his book
Well chosen, and not sullenly perused
In selfish silence, but imparted oft
As aught occurs that she may smile to hear,
Or turn to nourishment digested well.
Or if the garden with its many cares,
All well repaid, demand him, he attends
The welcome call, conscious how much the hand
Of lubbard Labour needs his watchful eye.

The Task, Book III.

LOVE OF NATURE.

I HAVE loved the rural walk through lanes
Of grassy swarth, close cropped by nibbling sheep
And skirted thick with intertexture firm
Of thorny boughs ; have loved the rural walk
O'er hills, through valleys, and by rivers' brink,
E'er since a truant boy I passed my bounds
To enjoy a ramble on the banks of Thames ;
And still remember, nor without regret,
Of hours that sorrow since has much endeared,
How oft, my slice of pocket store consumed,
Still hungering, penniless and far from home,
I fed on scarlet hips and stony haws,
Or blushing crabs, or berries that emboss
The bramble, black as jet, or sloes austere.

Hard fare ! but such as boyish appetite
 Disdains not, nor the palate undepraved
 By culinary arts, unsavoury deems.
 No Sofa then awaited my return,
 Nor Sofa then I needed. Youth repairs
 His wasted spirits quickly, by long toil
 Incurring short fatigue ; and though our years,
 As life declines, speed rapidly away,
 And not a year but pilfers as he goes
 Some youthful grace that age would gladly keep,
 A tooth or auburn lock, and by degrees
 Their length and colour from the locks they spare,
 The elastic spring of an unwearied foot
 That mounts the stile with ease, or leaps the fence,
 That play of lungs, inhaling and again
 Respiring freely the fresh air, that makes
 Swift pace or steep ascent no toil to me,
 Mine have not pilfered yet ; nor yet impaired
 My relish of fair prospect : scenes that soothed
 Or charmed me young, no longer young, I find
 Still soothing and of power to charm me still.
 And witness, dear companion of my walks,
 Whose arm this twentieth winter I perceive
 Fast locked in mine, with pleasure such as love.
 Confirmed by long experience of thy worth
 And well-tried virtues, could alone inspire,
 Witness a joy that thou hast doubled long.
 Thou knowest my praise of nature most sincere,
 And that my raptures are not conjured up
 To serve occasions of poetic pomp,
 But genuine, and art partner of them all.

The Task, Book I.

REVERIE.

JUST when our drawing-rooms begin to blaze
With lights, by clear reflection multiplied
From many a mirror, in which he of Gath,
Goliath, might have seen his giant bulk
Whole without stooping, towering crest and all,
My pleasures too begin. But me perhaps
The glowing hearth may satisfy awhile
With faint illumination, that uplifts
The shadow to the ceiling, there by fits
Dancing uncouthly to the quivering flame.
Not undelightful is an hour to me
So spent in parlour twilight ; such a gloom
Suits well the thoughtful or unthinking mind,
The mind contemplative, with some new theme
Pregnant, or indisposed alike to all.
Laugh ye, who boast your more mercurial powers,
That never feel a stupor, know no pause,
Nor need one ; I am conscious, and confess,
Fearless, a soul that does not always think.
Me oft has fancy, ludicrous and wild,
Soothed with a waking dream of houses, towers,
Trees, churches, and strange visages expressed
In the red cinders, while with poring eye
I gazed, myself creating what I saw.
Nor less amused have I quiescent watched
The sooty films that play upon the bars
Pendulous, and foreboding, in the view
Of superstition, prophesying still,
Though still deceived, some stranger's near approach.

'Tis thus the understanding takes repose
 In indolent vacuity of thought,
 And sleeps and is refreshed. Meanwhile the face
 Conceals the mood lethargic with a mask
 Of deep deliberation, as the man
 Were tasked to his full strength, absorbed and lost.
 Thus oft, reclined at ease, I lose an hour
 At evening, till at length the freezing blast,
 That sweeps the bolted shutter, summons home
 The recollected powers, and snapping short
 The glassy threads with which the fancy weaves
 Her brittle toils, restores me to myself.
 How calm is my recess, and how the frost,
 Raging abroad, and the rough wind, endear
 The silence and the warmth enjoyed within !
The Task, Book IV.

RURAL SCENES.

BUT slighted as it is, and by the great
 Abandoned, and, which still I more regret,
 Infected with the manners and the modes
 It knew not once, the country wins me still.
 I never framed a wish, or formed a plan,
 That flattered me with hopes of earthly bliss,
 But there I laid the scene. There early strayed
 My fancy, ere yet liberty of choice
 Had found me, or the hope of being free.
 My very dreams were rural, rural too
 The firstborn efforts of my youthful muse,
 Sportive, and jingling her poetic bells
 Ere yet her ear was mistress of their powers.

No bard could please me but whose lyre was tuned
To Nature's praises. Heroes and their feats
Fatigued me, never weary of the pipe
Of Tityrus, assembling, as he sang,
The rustic throng beneath his favourite beech.
Then MILTON had indeed a poet's charms :
New to my taste, his Paradise surpassed
The struggling efforts of my boyish tongue
To speak its excellence ; I danced for joy.
I marvelled much that, at so ripe an age
As twice seven years, his beauties had then first
Engaged my wonder, and admiring still,
And still admiring, with regret supposed
The joy half lost because not sooner found.
Thee too, enamoured of the life I loved,
Pathetic in its praise, in its pursuit
Determined, and possessing it at last
With transports such as favoured lovers feel,
I studied, prized, and wished that I had known,
Ingenious Cowley ! and though now reclaimed
By modern lights from an erroneous taste,
I cannot but lament thy splendid wit
Entangled in the cobwebs of the schools ;
I still revere thee, courtly though retired,
Though stretched at ease in Chertsey's silent bowers,
Not unemployed, and finding rich amends
For a lost world in solitude and verse.

The Task, Book IV.

WINTER EVENING.

HARK ! 'tis the twanging horn ! O'er yonder bridge
 That with its wearisome but needful length
 Bestrides the wintry flood, in which the moon
 Sees her unwrinkled face reflected bright,
 He comes, the herald of a noisy world,
 With spattered boots, strapped waist, and frozen locks,
 News from all nations lumbering at his back.
 True to his charge, the close-packed load behind,
 Yet careless what he brings, his one concern
 Is to conduct it to the destined inn,
 And having dropped the expected bag—pass on.
 He whistles as he goes, light-hearted wretch,
 Cold and yet cheerful : messenger of grief
 Perhaps to thousands, and of joy to some,
 To him indifferent whether grief or joy.
 Houses in ashes, and the fall of stocks,
 Births, deaths, and marriages, epistles wet
 With tears that trickled down the writer's cheeks
 Fast as the periods from his fluent quill,
 Or charged with amorous sighs of absent swains,
 Or nymphs responsive, equally affect
 His horse and him, unconscious of them all.
 But oh the important budget ! ushered in
 With such heart-shaking music, who can say
 What are its tidings ? have our troops awaked ?
 Or do they still, as if with opium drugged,
 Snore to the murmurs of the Atlantic wave ?
 Is India free ? and does she wear her plumed
 And jewelled turban with a smile of peace,

Or do we grind her still? The grand debate,
The popular harangue, the tart reply,
The logic, and the wisdom, and the wit,
And the loud laugh—I long to know them all ;
I burn to set the imprisoned wranglers free,
And give them voice and utterance once again.

Now stir the fire, and close the shutters fast,
Let fall the curtains, wheel the sofa round,
And while the bubbling and loud hissing urn
Throws up a steamy column, and the cups
That cheer but not inebriate, wait on each,
So let us welcome peaceful evening in.
Not such his evening, who with shining face
Sweats in the crowded theatre, and squeezed
And bored with elbow-points through both his sides,
Outscolds the ranting actor on the stage ;
Nor his, who patient stands till his feet throb,
And his head thumps, to feed upon the breath
Of patriots bursting with heroic rage,
Or placemen all tranquillity and smiles.
This folio of four pages, happy work !
Which not even critics criticise ; that holds
Inquisitive attention, while I read,
Fast bound in chains of silence, which the fair,
Though eloquent themselves, yet fear to break.

The Task, Book IV.

READING.

'Tis pleasant through the loopholes of retreat
To peep at such a world ; to see the stir
Of the great Babel, and not feel the crowd ;
To hear the roar she sends through all her gates,

At a safe distance, where the dying sound
 Falls a soft murmur on the uninjured ear.
 Thus sitting, and surveying thus at ease
 The globe and its concerns, I seem advanced
 To some secure and more than mortal height,
 That liberates and exempts me from them all.
 It turns submitted to my view, turns round
 With all its generations ; I behold
 The tumult, and am still. The sound of war
 Has lost its terrors ere it reaches me ;
 Grieves, but alarms me not. I mourn the pride
 And avarice that make man a wolf to man,
 I hear the faint echo of those brazen throats,
 By which he speaks the language of his heart,
 And sigh, but never tremble at the sound.
 He travels and expatiates, as the bee
 From flower to flower, so he from land to land ;
 The manners, customs, policy of all
 Pay contribution to the store he gleans ;
 He sucks intelligence in every clime,
 And spreads the honey of his deep research
 At his return, a rich repast for me.
 He travels, and I too. I tread his deck,
 Ascend his topmast, through his peering eyes
 Discover countries, with a kindred heart
 Suffer his woes, and share in his escapes ;
 While fancy, like the finger of a clock,
 Runs the great circuit, and is still at home.

O Winter ! ruler of the inverted year,
 Thy scattered hair with sleet like ashes filled,
 Thy breath congealed upon thy lips, thy cheeks
 Fringed with a beard made white with other snows
 Than those of age, thy forehead wrapt in clouds,
 A leafless branch thy sceptre, and thy throne
 A sliding car, indebted to no wheels,

But urged by storms along its slippery way ;
I love thee, all unlovely as thou seemest,
And dreaded as thou art. Thou holdest the sun
A prisoner in the yet undawning east,
Shortening his journey between morn and noon,
And hurrying him, impatient of his stay,
Down to the rosy west ; but kindly still
Compensating his loss with added hours
Of social converse and instructive ease,
And gathering, at short notice, in one group
The family dispersed, and fixing thought,
Not less dispersed by daylight and its cares.
I crown thee King of intimate delights,
Fireside enjoyments, homeborn happiness,
And all the comforts that the lowly roof
Of undisturbed retirement, and the hours
Of long uninterrupted evening know.
No rattling wheels stop short before these gates ;
No powdered pert, proficient in the art
Of sounding an alarm, assaults these doors
Till the street rings ; no stationary steeds
Cough their own knell, while, heedless of the sound,
The silent circle fan themselves, and quake :
But here the needle plies its busy task,
The pattern grows, the well-depicted flower,
Wrought patiently into the snowy lawn,
Unfolds its bosom ; buds, and leaves, and sprigs,
And curling tendrils, gracefully disposed,
Follow the nimble finger of the fair ;
A wreath that cannot fade, of flowers that blow
With most success when all besides decay.
The poet's or historian's page, by one
Made vocal for the amusement of the rest ;
The sprightly lyre, whose treasure of sweet sounds
The touch from many a trembling cord shakes out ;

And the clear voice symphonious, yet distinct,
 And in the charming strife triumphant still ;
 Beguile the night, and set a keener edge
 On female industry : the threaded steel
 Flies swiftly, and unfelt the task proceeds.
 The volume closed, the customary rites
 Of the last meal commence. A Roman meal,
 Such as the mistress of the world once found
 Delicious, when her patriots of high note,
 Perhaps by moonlight, at their humble doors,
 And under an old oak's domestic shade,
 Enjoyed, spare feast ! a radish and an egg.
 Discourse ensues, not trivial, yet not dull,
 Nor such as with a frown forbids the play
 Of fancy, or proscribes the sound of mirth ;
 Nor do we madly, like an impious world,
 Who deem religion frenzy, and the God
 That made them an intruder on their joys,
 Start at His awful name, or deem His praise
 A jarring note. Themes of a graver tone,
 Exciting oft our gratitude and love,
 While we retrace with memory's pointing wand,
 That calls the past to our exact review,
 The dangers we have 'scaped, the broken snare,
 The disappointed foe, deliverance found
 Unlooked for, life preserved and peace restored,
 Fruits of omnipotent eternal love.
 "Oh evenings worthy of the gods !" exclaimed
 The Sabine bard. Oh evenings, I reply,
 More to be prized and coveted than yours,
 As more illumined, and with nobler truths,
 That I and mine, and those we love, enjoy.

The Task, Book IV.

HIS HARE.

WELL,—one at least is safe. One shelter'd hare
Has never heard the sanguinary yell
Of cruel man, exulting in her woes.
Innocent partner of my peaceful home,
Whom ten long years' experience of my care
Has made at last familiar, she has lost
Much of her vigilant instinctive dread,
Not needful here, beneath a roof like mine.
Yes—thou mayst eat thy bread, and lick the hand
That feeds thee ; thou mayst frolic on the floor
At evening, and at night retire secure
To thy straw couch, and slumber unalarm'd ;
For I have gained thy confidence, have pledged
All that is human in me to protect
Thine unsuspecting gratitude and love.
If I survive thee I will dig thy grave ;
And when I place thee in it, sighing say,
I knew at least one hare that had a friend.

The Task, Book III.

PEACE.

So glide my life away ! and so at last,
My share of duties decently fulfilled,
May some disease, not tardy to perform
Its destined office, yet with gentle stroke

Dismiss me weary to a safe retreat,
 Beneath the turf that I have often trod.
 It shall not grieve me, then, that once, when called
 To dress a Sofa with the flowers of verse,
 I played awhile, obedient to the fair,
 With that light task ; but soon, to please her more,
 Whom flowers alone I knew would little please,
 Let fall the unfinished wreath, and roved for fruit ;
 Roved far, and gathered much : some harsh, 'tis true,
 Picked from the thorns and briars of reproof,
 But wholesome, well digested ; grateful some
 To palates that can taste immortal truth,
 Insipid else, and sure to be despised.
 But all is in His hand whose praise I seek.
 In vain the poet sings, and the world hears,
 If He regard not, though divine the theme.
 'Tis not in artful measures, in the chime
 And idle tinkling of a minstrel's lyre,
 To charm His ear, whose eye is on the heart ;
 Whose frown can disappoint the proudest strain,
 Whose approbation prosper—even mine.

The Task, Book VI.

A POETICAL EPISTLE TO LADY AUSTEN.

ON THE ANNIVERSARY OF THEIR FIRST ACQUAINTANCE.

DEAR ANNA—between friend and friend,
 Prose answers every common end ;
 Serves, in a plain and homely way,
 To express the occurrence of the day ;

Our health, the weather, and the news,
What walks we take, what books we chuse,
And all the floating thoughts we find
Upon the surface of the mind.

But when a poet takes the pen,
Far more alive than other men,
He feels a gentle tingling come
Down to his finger and his thumb.
Derived from nature's noblest part,
The centre of a glowing heart :
And this is what the world, who knows
No flights above the pitch of prose,
His more sublime vagaries slighting,
Denominates an itch for writing.
No wonder I, who scribble rhyme
To catch the triflers of the time,
And tell them truths divine and clear,
Which, couched in prose, they will not hear :
Who labour hard to allure and draw
The loiterers I never saw,
Should feel that itching and that tingling
With all my purpose intermingling,
To your intrinsic merit true,
When called to address myself to you.

Mysterious are His ways, whose power
Brings forth that unexpected hour,
When minds that never met before,
Shall meet, unite, and part no more :
It is the allotment of the skies,
The hand of the Supremely Wise,
That guides and governs our affections,
And plans and orders our connexions :
Directs us in our distant road,
And marks the bounds of our abode.

Thus we were settled when you found us,
 Peasants and children all around us,
 Not dreaming of so dear a friend,
 Deep in the abyss of Silver-End.
 Thus Martha, even against her will,
 Perched on the top of yonder hill ;
 And you, though you must needs prefer
 The fairer scenes of sweet Sancerre,
 Are come from distant Loire, to choose
 A cottage on the banks of Ouse.
 This page of Providence quite new,
 And now just opening to our view,
 Employs our present thoughts and pains
 To guess and spell what it contains :
 But day by day, and year by year,
 Will make the dark enigma clear ;
 And furnish us, perhaps, at last,
 Like other scenes already past,
 With proof, that we, and our affairs,
 Are part of a Jehovah's cares ;
 For God unfolds by slow degrees
 The purport of His deep decrees ;
 Sheds every hour a clearer light
 In aid of our defective sight ;
 And spreads, at length, before the soul,
 A beautiful and perfect whole,
 Which busy man's inventive brain
 Toils to anticipate, in vain.

Say, Anna, had you never known
 The beauties of a rose full blown,
 Could you, though luminous your eye,
 By looking on the bud descry,
 Or guess, with a prophetic power,
 The future splendour of the flower ?

Just so, the Omnipotent, who turns
The system of a world's concerns,
From mere minutiae can educe
Events of most important use,
And bid a dawning sky display
The blaze of a meridian day.
But who can tell how vast the plan
Which this day's incident began ?
Too small, perhaps, the slight occasion
For our dim-sighted observation ;
It pass'd unnoticed, as the bird
That cleaves the yielding air unheard,
And yet may prove when understood
An harbinger of endless good.
Not that I deem, or mean to call
Friendship a blessing cheap or small :
But merely to remark, that ours,
Like some of Nature's sweetest flowers,
Rose from a seed of tiny size,
That seem'd to promise no such prize ;
A transient visit intervening,
And made almost without a meaning
(Hardly the effect of inclination,
Much less of pleasing expectation),
Produced a friendship, then begun,
That has cemented us in one ;
And placed it in our power to prove,
By long fidelity and love,
That Solomon has wisely spoken,—
“ A threefold cord is not soon broken.”

THE VALEDICTION.

(ADDRESSED TO LORD THURLOW AND GEORGE COLMAN,
WHO TOOK NO NOTICE OF THE COPY OF HIS BOOK
SENT TO THEM.)

FAREWELL, false hearts ! whose best affections fail,
Like shallow brooks which summer suns exhale !
Forgetful of the man whom once ye chose,
Cold in his cause, and careless of his woes,
I bid you both a long and last adieu,
Cold in my turn, and unconcerned like you.

First, farewell Niger, whom, now duly proved,
I disregard as much as once I loved.
Your brain well furnished, and your tongue well taught
To press with energy your ardent thought,
Your senatorial dignity of face,
Sound sense, intrepid spirit, manly grace,
Have raised you high as talents can ascend,
Made you a peer, but spoilt you for a friend !
Pretend to all that parts have e'er acquired ;
Be great, be feared, be envied, be admired ;
To fame as lasting as the earth pretend,
But not, hereafter, to the name of friend !
I sent you verse, and, as your lordship knows,
Backed with a modest sheet of humble prose ;
Not to recall a promise to your mind,
Fulfilled with ease had you been so inclined,
But to comply with feelings, and to give
Proof of an old affection still alive.

Your sullen silence serves at least to tell
Your altered heart ; and so, my lord, farewell !

Next, busy actor on a meaner stage,
Amusement-monger of a trifling age,
Illustrious histrionic patentee,
Terentius, once my friend, farewell to thee !
In thee some virtuous qualities combine
To fit thee for a nobler part than thine,
Who, born a gentleman, hast stooped too low,
To live by buskin, sock, and raree-show.
Thy schoolfellow, and partner of thy plays,
Where Nichol swung the birch and twined the bays,
And having known thee bearded, and full grown,
The weekly censor of a laughing town,
I thought the volume I presumed to send,
Graced with the name of a long-absent friend,
Might prove a welcome gift, and touch thine heart,
Not hard by nature, in a feeling part.
But thou, it seems (what cannot grandeur do,
Though but a dream !), art grown disdainful too ;
And strutting in thy school of queens and kings,
Who fret their hour and are forgotten things,
Hast caught the cold distemper of the day,
And, like his lordship, cast thy friend away.
Oh, Friendship ! cordial of the human breast !
So little felt, so fervently professed !
Thy blossoms deck our unsuspecting years ;
The promise of delicious fruit appears :
We hug the hopes of constancy and truth,
Such is the folly of our dreaming youth ;
But soon, alas ! detect the rash mistake
That sanguine inexperience loves to make ;
And view with tears the expected harvest lost,
Decayed by time, or withered by a frost.

Whoever undertakes a friend's great part
Should be renewed in nature, pure in heart,
Prepared for martyrdom, and strong to prove
A thousand ways the force of genuine love.
He may be called to give up health and gain,
To exchange content for trouble, ease for pain,
To echo sigh for sigh, and groan for groan,
And wet his cheeks with sorrows not his own.
The heart of man, for such a task too frail,
When most relied on is most sure to fail ;
And, summoned to partake its fellow's woe,
Starts from its office like a broken bow.

Votaries of business and of pleasure prove
Faithless alike in friendship and in love.
Retired from all the circles of the gay,
And all the crowds that bustle life away,
To scenes where competition, envy, strife,
Beget no thunder-clouds to trouble life,
Let me, the charge of some good angel, find
One who has known and has escaped mankind ;
Polite, yet virtuous, who has brought away
The manners, not the morals, of the day :
With him, perhaps with *her* (for men have known
No firmer friendships than the fair have shown),
Let me enjoy, in some unthought-of spot,
All former friends forgiven and forgot,
Down to the close of life's fast fading scene,
Union of hearts, without a flaw between.
'Tis grace, 'tis bounty, and it calls for praise,
If God give health, that sunshine of our days !
And if He add, a blessing shared by few,
Content of heart, more praises still are due :
But if He grant a friend, that boon possessed
Indeed is treasure, and crowns all the rest ;

And giving one, whose heart is in the skies,
Born from above, and made divinely wise,
He gives, what bankrupt Nature never can,
Whose noblest coin is light and brittle man,
Gold, purer far than Ophir ever knew,
A soul, an image of Himself, and therefore true.

November 1783.

TO THE REV. MR. NEWTON,

ON HIS RETURN FROM RAMSGATE.

THAT ocean you of late surveyed,
Those rocks, I too have seen,
But I afflicted and dismayed,
You tranquil and serene.

You from the flood-controlling steep
Saw stretched before your view,
With conscious joy, the threatening deep,
No longer such to you.

To me the waves that ceaseless broke
Upon the dangerous coast,
Hoarsely and ominously spoke
Of all my treasure lost.

Your sea of troubles you have past,
And found the peaceful shore ;
I, tempest-tossed, and wrecked at last,
Come home to port no more.

October 1780.

TO THE NIGHTINGALE

WHICH THE AUTHOR HEARD SING ON NEW YEAR'S
DAY, 1792.

WHENCE is it, that amazed I hear
From yonder withered spray,
This foremost morn of all the year,
The melody of May?

And why, since thousands would be proud
Of such a favour shown,
Am I selected from the crowd,
To witness it alone?

Sing'st thou, sweet Philomel, to me,
For that I also long
Have practised in the groves like thee,
Though not like thee, in song?

Or sing'st thou rather, under force
Of some divine command,
Commissioned to presage a course
Of happier days at hand?

Thrice welcome then ! for many a long
And joyless year have I,
As thou to-day, put forth my song
Beneath a wintry sky.

But thee no wintry skies can harm,
Who only need'st to sing,
To make even January charm,
And every season Spring.

TO MRS. UNWIN.

MARY ! I want a lyre with other strings,
Such aid from heaven as some have feign'd they drev
An eloquence scarce given to mortals, new
And undebased by praise of meaner things,
That, ere through age or woe I shed my wings,
I may record thy worth with honour due,
In verse as musical as thou art true,
And that immortalises whom it sings.
But thou hast little need. There is a book
By seraphs writ with beams of heavenly light,
On which the eyes of God not rarely look,
A chronicle of actions just and bright ;
There all thy deeds, my faithful Mary, shine,
And, since thou own'st that praise, I spare thee mine.

May 1793.

THE SHRUBBERY.

WRITTEN IN A TIME OF AFFLICTION.

OH happy shades ! to me unblest,
Friendly to peace, but not to me,
How ill the scene that offers rest,
And heart that cannot rest, agree !

This glassy stream, that spreading pine,
 Those alders quivering to the breeze,
 Might soothe a soul less hurt than mine,
 And please, if anything could please.

But fix'd, unalterable Care,
 Foregoes not what she feels within,
 Shows the same sadness everywhere,
 And slights the season and the scene.

For all that pleased in wood or lawn,
 While Peace possess'd these silent bowers,
 Her animating smile withdrawn,
 Has lost its beauties and its powers.

The saint or moralist should tread
 This moss-grown alley, musing slow ;
 They seek like me the secret shade,
 But not like me, to nourish woe.

Me fruitful scenes and prospects waste,
 Alike admonish not to roam ;
 These tell me of enjoyments past,
 And those of sorrows yet to come.

TO WILLIAM HAYLEY, ESQ.

HAYLEY, thy tenderness fraternal, shown,
 In our first interview, delightful guest !
 To Mary, and me for her dear sake distressed,
 Such as it is has made my heart thy own,

Though heedless now of new engagements grown :
 For threescore winters make a wintry breast,
 And I had purposed ne'er to go in quest
 Of Friendship more, except with God alone.
 But thou hast won me : nor is God my foe,
 Who, ere this last afflictive scene began,
 Sent thee to mitigate the dreadful blow,
 My brother, by whose sympathy I know
 Thy true deserts infallibly to scan,
 Not more to admire the Bard than love the Man.

June 2. 1792.

TO MARY.

THE twentieth year is well-nigh past,
 Since first our sky was overcast ;
 Ah, would that this might be the last !
My Mary !

Thy spirits have a fainter flow,
 I see thee daily weaker grow ;
 'Twas my distress that brought thee low,
My Mary !

Thy needles, once a shining store,
 For my sake restless heretofore,
 Now rust disused, and shine no more,
My Mary !

For though thou gladly wouldst fulfil
The same kind office for me still,
Thy sight now seconds not thy will,
My Mary !

But well thou playedst the housewife's part,
And all thy threads with magic art
Have wound themselves about this heart,
My Mary !

Thy indistinct expressions seem
Like language uttered in a dream ;
Yet me they charm, whate'er the theme,
My Mary !

Thy silver locks, once auburn bright,
Are still more lovely in my sight
Than golden beams of orient light,
My Mary !

For, could I view nor them nor thee,
What sight worth seeing could I see ?
The sun would rise in vain for me,
My Mary !

Partakers of thy sad decline,
Thy hands their little force resign ;
Yet, gently prest, press gently mine,
My Mary !

Such feebleness of limbs thou provest,
That now at every step thou movest,
Upheld by two ; yet still thou lovest,
My Mary !

And still to love, though press'd with ill,
In wintry age to feel no chill,
With me is to be lovely still,

My Mary !

But ah ! by constant heed I know,
How oft the sadness that I show
Transforms thy smiles to looks of woe,

My Mary !

And should my future lot be cast,
With much resemblance of the past,
Thy worn-out heart will break at last,

My Mary !

THE CASTAWAY.

OBSCUREST night involved the sky,
The Atlantic billows roared,
When such a destined wretch as I,
Washed headlong from on board,
Of friends, of hope, of all bereft,
His floating home for ever left.

No braver chief could Albion boast
Than he with whom he went,
Nor ever ship left Albion's coast
With warmer wishes sent.
He loved them both, but both in vain,
Nor him beheld, nor her again.

Not long beneath the whelming brine,
 Expert to swim, he lay ;
 Nor soon he felt his strength decline,
 Or courage die away ;
 But waged with death a lasting strife,
 Supported by despair of life.

He shouted : nor his friends had failed
 To check the vessel's course,
 But so the furious blast prevailed,
 That, pitiless perforce,
 They left their outcast mate behind,
 And scudded still before the wind.

Some succour yet they could afford ;
 And such as storms allow,
 The cask, the coop, the floated cord,
 Delayed not to bestow.
 But he (they knew) nor ship nor shore
 Whate'er they gave, should visit more.

Nor, cruel as it seemed, could he
 Their haste himself condemn,
 Aware that flight, in such a sea,
 Alone could rescue them ;
 Yet bitter felt it still to die
 Deserted, and his friends so nigh.

He long survives, who lives an hour
 In ocean, self-upheld ;
 And so long he, with unspent power,
 His destiny repelled ;
 And ever, as the minutes flew,
 Entreated help, or cried " Adieu !"

At length, his transient respite past,
His comrades, who before
Had heard his voice in every blast,
Could catch the sound no more :
For then, by toil subdued, he drank
The stifling wave, and then he sank.

No poet wept him ; but the page
Of narrative sincere,
That tells his name, his worth, his age,
Is wet with Anson's tear :
And tears by bards or heroes shed
Alike immortalise the dead.

I therefore purpose not, or dream,
Descanting on his fate,
To give the melancholy theme
A more enduring date :
But misery still delights to trace
Its semblance in another's case.

No voice divine the storm allayed,
No light propitious shone,
When, snatched from all effectual aid,
We perished, each alone :
But I beneath a rougher sea,
And whelmed in deeper gulfs than he.

March 20, 1799.

DESCRIPTIVE

A LANDSCAPE.

How oft upon yon eminence our pace
Has slacken'd to a pause, and we have borne
The ruffling wind, scarce conscious that it blew,
While admiration feeding at the eye,
And still unsated, dwelt upon the scene.
Thence with what pleasure have we just discern'd
The distant plough slow moving, and beside
His labouring team, that swerved not from the track,
The sturdy swain diminish'd to a boy.
Here Ouse, slow winding through a level plain
Of spacious meads with cattle sprinkled o'er,
Conducts the eye along his sinuous course
Delighted. There, fast rooted in their bank
Stand, never overlook'd, our favourite elms,
That screen the herdsman's solitary hut ;
While far beyond, and overthwart the stream,
That, as with molten glass, inlays the vale,
The sloping land recedes into the clouds ;
Displaying on its varied side the grace
Of hedge-row beauties numberless, square tower,
Tall spire, from which the sound of cheerful bells
Just undulates upon the listening ear ;
Groves, heaths, and smoking villages remote.
Scenes must be beautiful which daily view'd,
Please daily, and whose novelty survives

Long knowledge and the scrutiny of years :
Praise justly due to those that I describe.

Nor rural sights alone, but rural sounds
Exhilarate the spirit, and restore
The tone of languid nature. Mighty winds,
That sweep the skirt of some far-spreading wood
Of ancient growth, make music not unlike
The dash of Ocean on his winding shore,
And lull the spirit while they fill the mind ;
Unnumbered branches waving in the blast,
And all their leaves fast fluttering, all at once.
Nor less composure waits upon the roar
Of distant floods, or on the softer voice
Of neighbouring fountain, or of rills that slip
Through the cleft rock, and chiming as they fall
Upon loose pebbles, lose themselves at length
In matted grass, that with a livelier green
Betrays the secret of their silent course.
Nature inanimate employs sweet sounds,
But animated nature sweeter still,
To soothe and satisfy the human ear.
Ten thousand warblers cheer the day, and one
The livelong night : nor these alone, whose notes
Nice-fingered art must emulate in vain,
But cawing rooks, and kites that swim sublime
In still repeated circles, screaming loud ;
The jay, the pie, and even the boding owl
That hails the rising moon, have charms for me.
Sounds inharmonious in themselves and harsh,
Yet heard in scenes where peace for ever reigns,
And only there, please highly for their sake.

Peace to the artist, whose ingenious thought
Devised the weather-house, that useful toy !
Fearless of humid air and gathering rains
Forth steps the man,—an emblem of myself,—

More delicate, his timorous mate retires.
When Winter soaks the fields, and female feet,
Too weak to struggle with tenacious clay,
Or ford the rivulets, are best at home,
The task of new discoveries falls on me.
At such a season, and with such a charge,
Once went I forth, and found, till then unknown,
A cottage, whither oft we since repair :
'Tis perched upon the green-hill top, but close
Environed with a ring of branching elms
That overhang the thatch, itself unseen,
Peeps at the vale below ; so thick beset
With foliage of such dark redundant growth,
I called the low-roofed lodge the *Peasant's Nest*.
And hidden as it is, and far remote
From such unpleasing sounds as haunt the ear
In village or in town, the bay of curs
Incessant, clinking hammers, grinding wheels,
And infants clamorous whether pleased or pained,
Oft have I wished the peaceful covert mine.
Here, I have said, at least I should possess
The poet's treasure, silence, and indulge
The dreams of fancy, tranquil and secure.
Vain thought ! the dweller in that still retreat
Dearly obtains the refuge it affords.
Its elevated site forbids the wretch
To drink sweet waters of the crystal well ;
He dips his bowl into the weedy ditch,
And, heavy-laden, brings his beverage home,
Far-fetch'd and little worth ; nor seldom waits,
Dependent on the baker's punctual call,
To hear his creaking panniers at the door,
Angry and sad, and his last crust consumed.
So farewell envy of the *Peasant's Nest*.
If solitude make scant the means of life,

Society for me !—Thou seeming sweet,
Be still a pleasing object in my view,
My visit still, but never mine abode.

The Task, Book I.

SPRING.

DESCENDING now (but cautious lest too fast)
A sudden steep, upon a rustic bridge,
We pass a gulf, in which the willows dip
Their pendent boughs, stooping as if to drink.
Hence, ankle-deep in moss and flowery thyme,
We mount again, and feel at every step
Our foot half sunk in hillocks green and soft,
Raised by the mole, the miner of the soil.
He, not unlike the great ones of mankind,
Disfigures earth, and plotting in the dark,
Toils much to earn a monumental pile,
That may record the mischiefs he has done.

The summit gain'd, behold the proud alcove
That crowns it ! yet not all its pride secures
The grand retreat from injuries impress'd
By rural carvers who with knives deface
The pannels, leaving an obscure rude name
In characters uncouth and spelt amiss ;
So strong the zeal t' immortalise himself
Beats in the breast of man that e'en a few,
Few transient years, won from the abyss abhorred
Of blank oblivion, seem a glorious prize,
And even to a clown. Now roves the eye,
And posted on this speculative height
Exults in its command. The sheepfold here

Pours out its fleecy tenants o'er the glebe.
At first, progressive as a stream, they seek
The middle field ; but scattered by degrees,
Each to his choice, soon whiten all the land.
There from the sunburnt hayfield, homeward creeps
The loaded wain, while, lightened of its charge,
The wain that meets it passes swiftly by,
The boorish driver leaning o'er his team
Vociferous, and impatient of delay.
Nor less attractive is the woodland scene,
Diversified with trees of every growth,
Alike yet various. Here the gray smooth trunks
Of ash, or lime, or beech, distinctly shine,
Within the twilight of their distant shades ;
There lost behind a rising ground, the wood
Seems sunk, and shortened to its topmost boughs.
No tree in all the grove but has its charms,
Though each its hue peculiar : paler some,
And of a wannish gray ; the willow such,
And poplar that with silver lines his leaf,
And ash far stretching his umbrageous arm ;
Of deeper green the elm ; and deeper still,
Lord of the woods, the long-surviving oak.
Some glossy-leaved, and shining in the sun,
The maple, and the beech of oily nuts
Prolific, and the lime at dewy eve
Diffusing odours : nor unnoted pass
The sycamore, capricious in attire.
Now green, now tawny, and ere autumn yet
Have changed the woods, in scarlet honours bright.
O'er these, but far beyond (a spacious map
Of hill and valley interposed between),
The Ouse, dividing the well-watered land,
Now glitters in the sun, and now retires,
As bashful, yet impatient to be seen.

Hence the declivity is sharp and short,
And such the re-ascent ; between them weeps
A little naiad her impoverished urn
All summer long, which winter fills again.

The Task, Book I.

HERE unmolested, through whatever sign
The sun proceeds, I wander ; neither mist,
Nor freezing sky nor sultry, checking me,
Nor stranger intermeddling with my joy.
Even in the spring and playtime of the year,
That calls the unwonted villager abroad
With all her little ones, a sportive train,
To gather kingcups in the yellow mead,
And prink their hair with daisies, or to pick
A cheap but wholesome salad from the brook,
These shades are all my own. The timorous hare,
Grown so familiar with her frequent guest,
Scarce shuns me ; and the stockdove unalarmed
Sits cooing in the pine-tree, nor suspends
His long love-ditty for my near approach.
Drawn from his refuge in some lonely elm
That age or injury has hollowed deep,
Where on his bed of wool and matted leaves
He has outslept the winter, ventures forth
To frisk awhile, and bask in the warm sun,
The squirrel, flippant, pert, and full of play.
He sees me, and at once, swift as a bird,
Ascends the neighbouring beech ; there whisks his
brush,
And perks his ears, and stamps and scolds aloud,
With all the prettiness of feigned alarm,
And anger insignificantly fierce.

The heart is hard in nature, and unfit
For human fellowship, as being void

Of sympathy, and therefore dead alike
To love and friendship both, that is not pleased
With sight of animals enjoying life,
Nor feels their happiness augment his own.
The bounding fawn that darts across the glade
When none pursues, through mere delight of heart,
And spirits buoyant with excess of glee ;
The horse, as wanton and almost as fleet,
That skims the spacious meadow at full speed,
Then stops and snorts, and throwing high his heels
Starts to the voluntary race again ;
The very kine that gambol at high noon,
The total herd receiving first from one
That leads the dance a summons to be gay,
Though wild their strange vagaries, and uncouth
Their efforts, yet resolved with one consent
To give such act and utterance as they may
To ecstasy too big to be suppressed ;—
These, and a thousand images of bliss,
With which kind Nature graces every scene
Where cruel man defeats not her design,
Impart to the benevolent, who wish
All that are capable of pleasure pleased,
A far superior happiness to theirs,
The comfort of a reasonable joy.

The Task, Book VI.

THE EFFECT OF NATURAL BEAUTY.

LOVELY indeed the mimic works of Art,
But Nature's works far lovelier. I admire,
None more admires, the painter's magic skill,
Who shows me that which I shall never see,

Conveys a distant country into mine,
And throws Italian light on English walls :
But imitative strokes can do no more
Than please the eye—sweet Nature every sense.
The air salubrious of her lofty hills,
The cheering fragrance of her dewy vales.
And music of her woods—no works of man
May rival these ; these all bespeak a power
Peculiar, and exclusively her own.
Beneath the open sky she spreads the feast ;
'Tis free to all—'tis every day renewed ;
Who scorns it, starves deservedly at home.
He does not scorn it, who, imprisoned long
In some unwholesome dungeon, and a prey
To sallow sickness, which the vapours dank
And clammy of his dark abode have bred,
Escapes at last to liberty and light :
His cheek recovers soon its healthful hue,
His eye relumines its extinguished fires,
He walks, he leaps, he runs—is winged with joy,
And riots in the sweets of every breeze.
He does not scorn it, who has long endured
A fever's agonies, and fed on drugs.
Nor yet the mariner, his blood inflamed
With acrid salts ; his very heart athirst
To gaze at Nature in her green array,
Upon the ship's tall side he stands, possessed
With visions prompted by intense desire :
Fair fields appear below, such as he left
Far distant, such as he would die to find,—
He seeks them headlong, and is seen no more.

The Task, Book I.

EVENING.

COME, Evening, once again, season of peace,
Return, sweet Evening, and continue long !
Methinks I see thee in the streaky west,
With matron step slow moving, while the night
Treads on thy sweeping train ; one hand employ'd
In letting fall the curtain of repose
On bird and beast, the other charged for man
With sweet oblivion of the cares of day ;
Not sumptuously adorn'd, nor needing aid,
Like homely featured night, of clustering gems ;
A star or two just twinkling on thy brow
Suffices thee ; save that the moon is thine
No less than hers, not worn indeed on high
With ostentatious pageantry, but set
With modest grandeur in thy purple zone,
Resplendent less, but of an ampler round.
Come then, and thou shalt find thy votary calm,
Or make me so. Composure is thy gift :
And whether I devote thy gentle hours
To books, to music, or the poet's toil ;
To weaving nets for bird-alluring fruit ;
Or twining silken threads round ivory reels,
When they command whom man was born to please ;
I slight thee not, but make thee welcome still.

The Task, Book IV.

WINTER : THE FIRST SNOW.

I SAW the woods and fields at close of day
A variegated show ; the meadows green,
Though faded ; and the lands, where lately waved
The golden harvest, of a mellow brown,
Upturn'd so lately by the forceful share ;
I saw far off the weedy fallows smile
With verdure not unprofitable, grazed
By flocks, fast feeding, and selecting each
His favourite herb ; while all the leafless groves,
That skirt the horizon, wore a sable hue,
Scarce noticed in the kindred dusk of eve.
To-morrow brings a change, a total change !
Which even now, though silently perform'd
And slowly, and by most unfelt, the face
Of universal nature undergoes.
Fast falls a fleecy shower : the downy flakes
Descending, and, with never-ceasing lapse,
Softly alighting upon all below,
Assimilate all objects. Earth receives
Gladly the thickening mantle, and the green
And tender blade that fear'd the chilling blast,
Escapes unhurt beneath so warm a veil.

In such a world, so thorny, and where none
Finds happiness unblighted, or, if found,
Without some thistly sorrow at his side,
It seems the part of wisdom, and no sin
Against the law of love, to measure lots
With less distinguish'd than ourselves, that thus
We may with patience bear our moderate ills,
And sympathise with others, suffering more.

Ill fares the traveller now, and he that stalks
In ponderous boots beside his reeking team.
The wain goes heavily, impeded sore
By congregated loads adhering close
To the clogg'd wheels ; and in its sluggish pace
Noiseless appears a moving hill of snow.
The toiling steeds expand the nostril wide,
While every breath, by respiration strong
Forced downward, is consolidated soon
Upon their jutting chests. He, form'd to bear
The pelting brunt of the tempestuous night,
With half-shut eyes and pucker'd cheeks, and teeth
Presented bare against the storm, plods on.
One hand secures his hat, save when with both
He brandishes his pliant length of whip,
Resounding oft, and never heard in vain.

The Task, Book IV.

THE POOR IN WINTER.

POOR, yet industrious, modest, quiet, neat,
Such claim compassion in a night like this,
And have a friend in every feeling heart.
Warm'd while it lasts, by labour, all day long
They brave the season, and yet find at eve,
Ill clad and fed but sparely, time to cool.
The frugal housewife trembles when she lights
Her scanty stock of brushwood, blazing clear,
But dying soon, like all terrestrial joys.
The few small embers left she nurses well,
And while her infant race, with outspread hands,
And crowded knees, sit cowering o'er the sparks,

Retires, content to quake, so they be warm'd.
The man feels least, as more inured than she
To winter, and the current in his veins
More briskly moved by his severer toil ;
Yet he too finds his own distress in theirs.
The taper soon extinguish'd, which I saw
Dangled along at the cold finger's end
Just when the day declined, and the brown loaf
Lodged on the shelf, half eaten, without sauce
Of savoury cheese, or butter costlier still,
Sleep seems their only refuge : for, alas !
Where penury is felt the thought is chain'd,
And sweet colloquial pleasures are but few.
With all this thrift they thrive not. All the care
Ingenuous parsimony takes, but just
Saves the small inventory, bed and stool,
Skillet and old carved chest, from public sale.
They live, and live without extorted alms
From grudging hands, but other boast have none
To soothe their honest pride, that scorns to beg ;
Nor comfort else, but in their mutual love.
I praise you much, ye meek and patient pair,
For ye are worthy ; choosing rather far
A dry but independent crust, hard earn'd,
And eaten with a sigh, than to endure
The rugged frowns and insolent rebuffs
Of knaves in office, partial in the work
Of distribution ; liberal of their aid
To clamorous importunity in rags,
But oftentimes deaf to suppliants, who would blush
To wear a tatter'd garb however coarse,
Whom famine cannot reconcile to filth ;
These ask with painful shyness, and refused
Because deserving, silently retire.

The Task, Book IV.

THE WINTER MORNING.

'TIS morning ; and the sun with ruddy orb
Ascending fires the horizon : while the clouds
That crowd away before the driving wind,
More ardent as the disk emerges more,
Resemble most some city in a blaze,
Seen through the leafless wood. His slanting ray
Slides ineffectual down the snowy vale,
And tinging all with his own rosy hue,
From every herb and every spiry blade
Stretches a length of shadow o'er the field.
Mine, spindling into longitude immense,
In spite of gravity, and sage remark
That I myself am but a fleeting shade,
Provokes me to a smile. With eye askance
I view the muscular proportioned limb
Transformed to a lean shank. The shapeless pair,
As they designed to mock me, at my side
Take step for step ; and as I near approach
The cottage, walk along the plastered wall,
Preposterous sight ! the legs without the man.
The verdure of the plain lies buried deep
Beneath the dazzling deluge ; and the bents
And coarser grass, upspearing o'er the rest,
Of late unsightly and unseen, now shine
Conspicuous, and in bright apparel clad,
And fledged with icy feathers, nod superb.
The cattle mourn in corners where the fence
Screens them, and seem half-petrified to sleep
In unrecumbent sadness. There they wait

Their wonted fodder, not like hungering man,
Fretful if unsupplied, but silent, meek,
And patient of the slow-paced swain's delay.
He from the stack carves out the accustomed load,
Deep-plunging, and again deep-plunging oft,
His broad keen knife into the solid mass ;
Smooth as a wall the upright remnant stands,
With such undeviating and even force
He severs it away : no needless care
Lest storms should overset the leaning pile
Deciduous, or its own unbalanced weight.
Forth goes the woodman, leaving unconcerned
The cheerful haunts of man, to wield the axe
And drive the wedge in yonder forest drear,
From morn to eve his solitary task.
Shaggy, and lean, and shrewd, with pointed ears
And tail cropped short, half lurcher and half cur,
His dog attends him. Close behind his heel
Now creeps he slow ; and now with many a frisk
Wide scampering, snatches up the drifted snow
With ivory teeth, or ploughs it with his snout ;
Then shakes his powdered coat, and barks for joy.
Heedless of all his pranks, the sturdy churl
Moves right toward the mark ; nor stops for aught,
But now and then with pressure of his thumb
To adjust the fragrant charge of a short tube
That fumes beneath his nose : the trailing cloud
Streams far behind him, scenting all the air.

The Task, Book V.

THE BARNYARD.

Now from the roost, or from the neighbouring pale,
Where, diligent to catch the first faint gleam
Of smiling day, they gossiped side by side,
Come trooping at the housewife's well-known call
The feathered tribes domestic. Half on wing,
And half on foot, they brush the fleecy flood,
Conscious, and fearful of too deep a plunge.
The sparrows peep, and quit the sheltering caves
To seize the fair occasion. Well they eye
The scattered grain, and thievishly resolved
To escape the impending famine, often scared
As oft return, a pert voracious kind.
Clean riddance quickly made, one only care
Remains to each, the search of sunny nook,
Or shed impervious to the blast. Resigned
To sad necessity, the cock foregoes
His wonted strut, and wading at their head
With well-considered steps, seems to resent
His altered gait and stateliness retrenched.

The Task, Book V.

A BRIGHT DAY IN WINTER.

THE night was winter in his roughest mood,
The morning sharp and clear. But now at noon
Upon the southern side of the slant hills,
And where the woods fence off the northern blast,

The season smiles, resigning all its rage,
And has the warmth of May. The vault is blue
Without a cloud, and white without a speck
The dazzling splendour of the scene below.
Again the harmony comes o'er the vale,
And through the trees I view the embattled tower
Whence all the music. I again perceive
The soothing influence of the wafted strains,
And settle in soft musings as I tread
The walk, still verdant, under oaks and elms,
Whose outspread branches overarch the glade.
The roof, though movable through all its length
As the wind sways it, has yet well sufficed,
And intercepting in their silent fall
The frequent flakes, has kept a path for me.
No noise is here, or none that hinders thought.
The redbreast warbles still, but is content
With slender notes, and more than half suppressed :
Pleased with his solitude, and flitting light
From spray to spray, where'er he rests he shakes
From many a twig the pendent drops of ice,
That tinkle in the withered leaves below.
Stillness, accompanied with sounds so soft,
Charms more than silence. Meditation here
May think down hours to moments. Here the heart
May give a useful lesson to the head,
And learning wiser grow without his books.

The Task, Book VI.

THE LESSON OF THE STARS.

MAN views it and admires, but rests content
With what he views. The landscape has his praise,
But not its Author. Unconcerned who formed
The paradise he sees, he finds it such ;
And such well-pleased to find it, asks no more.
Not so the mind that has been touched from Heaven,
And in the school of sacred wisdom taught
To read His wonders, in whose thought the world,
Fair as it is, existed ere it was.
The soul that sees Him, or receives sublimed
New faculties, or learns at least to employ
More worthily the powers she owned before,
Discerns in all things what, with stupid gaze
Of ignorance, till then she overlooked,
A ray of heavenly light gilding all forms
Terrestrial, in the vast and the minute,
The unambiguous footsteps of the God
Who gives its lustre to an insect's wing,
And wheels His throne upon the rolling worlds.
Much conversant with Heaven, she often holds
With those fair ministers of light to man
That fill the skies nightly with silent pomp,
Sweet conference ; inquires what strains were they
With which heaven rang, when every star, in haste
To gratulate the new-created earth,
Sent forth a voice, and all the sons of God
Shouted for joy.—“ Tell me, ye shining hosts
That navigate a sea that knows no storms,
Beneath a vault unsullied with a cloud,

If from your elevation, whence ye view
Distinctly scenes invisible to man,
And systems of whose birth no tidings yet
Have reached this nether world, ye spy a race
Favoured as ours, transgressors from the womb,
And hasting to a grave, yet doomed to rise,
And to possess a brighter heaven than yours?
As one who long detained on foreign shores
Pants to return, and when he sees afar
His country's weather-bleached and battered rocks
From the green wave emerging, darts an eye
Radiant with joy towards the happy land,
So I with animated hopes behold,
And many an aching wish, your beamy fires,
That show like beacons in the blue abyss,
Ordained to guide the embodied spirit home,
From toilsome life to never-ending rest.

The Task, Book V.

POLITICAL.

THE MISERIES OF KINGS.

I PITY kings whom worship waits upon
Obsequious, from the cradle to the throne ;
Before whose infant eyes the flatterer bows,
And binds a wreath about their baby brows ;
Whom education stiffens into state,
And death awakens from that dream too late.
Oh ! if servility, with supple knees,
Whose trade it is to smile, to crouch, to please,—
If smooth dissimulation, skilled to grace
A devil's purpose with an angel's face,—
If smiling peeresses and simpering peers,
Encompassing his throne a few short years,—
If the gilt carriage and the pampered steed,
That wants no driving and disdains the lead,—
If guards, mechanically formed in ranks,
Playing, at beat of drum, their martial pranks,
Shouldering and standing, as if struck to stone,
While condescending majesty looks on,—
If monarchy consist in such base things,
Sighing, I say again, I pity kings !

To be suspected, thwarted, and withstood,
Even when he labours for his country's good,—
To see a band called patriot for no cause
But that they catch at popular applause,
Careless of all the anxiety he feels,
Hook disappointment on the public wheels,

With all their flippant fluency of tongue,
 Most confident, when palpably most wrong,—
 If this be kingly, then farewell for me
 All kingship, and may I be poor and free !

To be the Table Talk of clubs up stairs,
 To which the unwashed artificer repairs,
 To indulge his genius after long fatigue
 By diving into cabinet intrigue
 (For what kings deem a toil, as well they may,
 To him is relaxation and mere play) ;—
 To win no praise when well-wrought plans prevail,
 But to be rudely censured when they fail,—
 To doubt the love his favourites may pretend,
 And in reality to find no friend,—
 If he indulge a cultivated taste,
 His galleries with the works of art well graced,
 To hear it called extravagance and waste ;
 If these attendants, and if such as these,
 Must follow royalty, then welcome ease !
 However humble and confined the sphere,
 Happy the state that has not these to fear.

Table-Talk.

BRITISH FREEDOM.

—TELL me, if you can, what power maintains
 A Briton's scorn of arbitrary chains ?
 That were a theme might animate the dead,
 And move the lips of poets cast in lead.

B. The cause, though worth the search, may yet
 elude
 Conjecture and remark, however shrewd.

They take, perhaps, a well-directed aim,
Who seek it in his climate and his frame.
Liberal in all things else, yet Nature here
With stern severity deals out the year.
Winter invades the spring, and often pours
A chilling flood on summer's drooping flowers ;
Unwelcome vapours quench autumnal beams,
Ungential blasts attending, curl the streams ;
The peasants urge their harvest, ply the fork
With double toil, and shiver at their work.
Thus with a rigour, for his good designed,
She rears her favourite man of all mankind.
His form robust and of elastic tone,
Proportioned well, half muscle and half bone,
Supplies with warm activity and force
A mind well lodged, and masculine of course.
Hence Liberty, sweet Liberty, inspires
And keeps alive his fierce but noble fires.
Patient of constitutional control,
He bears it with meek manliness of soul ;
But if authority grow wanton, woe
To him that treads upon his free-born toe !
One step beyond the boundary of the laws
Fires him at once in Freedom's glorious cause.
Thus proud Prerogative, not much revered,
Is seldom felt, though sometimes seen and
heard ;
And in his cage, like parrot fine and gay,
Is kept to strut, look big, and talk away.
Born in a climate softer far than ours,
Not formed like us with such Herculean powers,
The Frenchman, easy, debonair, and brisk,
Give him his lass, his fiddle, and his frisk,
Is always happy, reign whoever may,
And laughs the sense of misery far away.

He drinks his simple beverage with a gust,
And feasting on an onion and a crust,
We never feel the alacrity and joy
With which he shouts and carols, "*Vive le Roy!*"
Filled with as much true merriment and glee
As if he heard his king say, "Slave, be free!"

Thus happiness depends, as nature shows,
Less on exterior things than most suppose.
Vigilant over all that He has made,
Kind Providence attends with gracious aid,
Bids equity throughout His works prevail,
And weighs the nations in an even scale.
—Freedom has a thousand charms to show,
That slaves, howe'er contented, never know.
The mind attains beneath her happy reign
The growth that Nature meant she should
attain ;

Religion, richest favour of the skies,
Stands most reveal'd before the freeman's eyes ;
No shades of superstition blot the day,
Liberty chases all that gloom away.
The soul, emancipated, unoppress'd,
Free to prove all things, and hold fast the best,
Learns much, and to a thousand listening minds,
Communicates with joy the good she finds.
Courage in arms, and ever prompt to show
His manly forehead to the fiercest foe ;
Glorious in war, but for the sake of peace,
His spirits rising as his toils increase,
Guards well what arts and industry have won,
And Freedom claims him for her firstborn son.
Slaves fight for what were better cast away,
The chain that binds them, and a tyrant's sway ;
But they that fight for freedom, undertake
The noblest cause mankind can have at stake,

Religion, virtue, truth, whate'er we call
A blessing, freedom is the pledge of all.
O Liberty ! the prisoner's pleasing dream,
The poet's muse, his passion, and his theme,
Genius is thine, and thou art Fancy's nurse,
Lost without thee the ennobling powers of verse ;
Heroic song from thy free touch acquires
Its clearest tone, the rapture it inspires.
Place me where Winter breathes his keenest air,
And I will sing, if Liberty be there ;
And I will sing at Liberty's dear feet,
In Afric's torrid clime, or India's fiercest heat.

Table-Talk.

THE PATRIOT AND THE MARTYR.

PATRIOTS have toil'd, and in their country's cause
Bled nobly, and their deeds, as they deserve,
Receive proud recompense. We give in charge
Their names to the sweet lyre. The historic muse,
Proud of the treasure, marches with it down
To latest times ; and Sculpture, in her turn,
Gives bond in stone and ever-during brass
To guard them, and to immortalise her trust.
But fairer wreaths are due, though never paid,
To those who, posted at the shrine of truth,
Have fallen in her defence. A patriot's blood,
Well spent in such a strife, may earn indeed,
And for a time ensure to his loved land,
The sweets of liberty and equal laws ;
But martyrs struggle for a brighter prize,

And win it with more pain. Their blood is shed
In confirmation of the noblest claim,
Our claim to feed upon immortal truth,
To walk with God, to be divinely free,
To soar, and to anticipate the skies.
Yet few remember them. They lived unknown
Till Persecution dragg'd them into fame,
And chased them up to heaven. Their ashes flew
—No marble tells us whither. With their names
No bard embalms and sanctifies his song ;
And history, so warm on meaner themes,
Is cold on this. She execrates indeed
The tyranny that doomed them to the fire,
But gives the glorious sufferers little praise.

He is the freeman whom the truth makes free,
And all are slaves beside. There's not a chain
That hellish foes confederate for his harm
Can wind around him, but he casts it off
With as much ease as Samson his green withes.
He looks abroad into the varied field
Of nature, and though poor perhaps compared
With those whose mansions glitter in his sight,
Calls the delightful scenery all his own.
His are the mountains, and the valleys his,
And the resplendent rivers. His to enjoy
With a propriety that none can feel,
But who, with filial confidence inspired,
Can lift to heaven an unpresumptuous eye,
And smiling say—"My Father made them all !"
Are they not his by a peculiar right,
And by an emphasis of interest his,
Whose eye they fill with tears of holy joy,
Whose heart with praise, and whose exalted mind
With worthy thoughts of that unwearied love
That planned, and built, and still upholds a world

So clothed with beauty, for rebellious man ?
Yes—ye may fill your garners, ye that reap
The loaded soil, and ye may waste much good
In senseless riot ; but ye will not find
In feast or in the chase, in song or dance,
A liberty like his, who unimpeached
Of usurpation, and to no man's wrong,
Appropriates nature as his Father's work,
And has a richer use of yours than you.
He is indeed a freeman. Free by birth
Of no mean city, planned or ere the hills
Were built, the fountains opened, or the sea
With all his roaring multitude of waves.
His freedom is the same in every State ;
And no condition of this changeful life,
So manifold in cares, whose every day
Brings its own evil with it, makes it less :
For he has wings that neither sickness, pain,
Nor penury, can cripple or confine.
No nook so narrow but he spreads them there
With ease, and is at large. The oppressor holds
His body bound, but knows not what a range
His spirit takes, unconscious of a chain,
And that to bind him is a vain attempt
Whom God delights in, and in whom He dwells.

The Task, Book V.

THE BASTILLE.

PUBLISHED IN 1780, NINE YEARS BEFORE THE FALL
OF THE BASTILLE.

THEN shame to manhood, and opprobrious more
To France than all her losses and defeats,
Old or of later date, by sea or land,
Her house of bondage, worse than that of old
Which God avenged on Pharaoh—the Bastille.
Ye horrid towers, the abode of broken hearts,
Ye dungeons, and ye cages of despair,
That monarchs have supplied from age to age
With music such as suits their sovereign ears,
The sighs and groans of miserable men !
There's not an English heart that would not leap
To hear that ye were fallen at last ; to know
That even our enemies, so oft employed
In forging chains for us, themselves were free.
For he who values liberty confines
His zeal for her predominance within
No narrow bounds ; her cause engages him
Wherever pleaded. 'Tis the cause of man.
There dwell the most forlorn of human kind,
Immured though unaccused, condemned untried,
Crucelly spared, and hopeless of escape.
There, like the visionary emblem seen
By him of Babylon, life stands a stump,
And, filleted about with hoops of brass,
Still lives, though all its pleasant boughs are gone.
To count the hour-bell, and expect no change ;

And ever as the sullen sound is heard,
Still to reflect, that though a joyless note
To him whose moments all have one dull pace,
Ten thousand rovers in the world at large
Account it music ; that it summons some
To theatre or jocund feast or ball ;
The wearied hireling finds it a release
From labour ; and the lover, who has chid
Its long delay, feels every welcome stroke
Upon his heart-strings, trembling with delight -
To fly for refuge from distracting thought
To such amusements as ingenious woe
Contrives, hard shifting and without her tools--
To read engraven on the mouldy walls,
In staggering types, his predecessor's tale,
A sad memorial, and subjoin his own--
To turn purveyor to an overgorged
And bloated spider, till the pampered pest
Is made familiar, watches his approach,
Comes at his call, and serves him for a friend--
To wear out time in numbering to and fro
The studs that thick emboss his iron door,
Then downward and then upward, then aslant,
And then alternate, with a sickly hope
By dint of change to give his tasteless task
Some relish, till the sum exactly found
In all directions, he begins again :--
Oh comfortless existence ! hemm'd around
With woes, which who that suffers would not kneel
And beg for exile, or the pangs of death ?
That man should thus encroach on fellow-man,
Abridge him of his just and native rights,
Eradicate him, tear him from his hold
Upon the endearments of domestic life
And social, nip his fruitfulness and use,

And doom him for perhaps a heedless word
To barrenness, and solitude, and tears,
Moves indignation, makes the name of king
(Of king whom such prerogative can please)
As dreadful as the Manichean God,
Adored through fear, strong only to destroy.

The Task, Book V.

TRUE LOYALTY.

WE too are friends to loyalty. We love
The king who loves the law, respects his bounds,
And reigns content within them : him we serve
Freely and with delight, who leaves us free :
But recollecting still that he is man,
We trust him not too far. King though he be,
And king in England too, he may be weak,
And vain enough to be ambitious still,
May exercise amiss his proper powers,
Or covet more than freemen choose to grant :
Beyond that mark is treason. He is ours,
To administer, to guard, to adorn the State,
But not to warp or change it. We are his,
To serve him nobly in the common cause,
True to the death, but not to be his slaves.
Mark now the difference, ye that boast your love
Of kings, between your loyalty and ours :
We love the man, the paltry pageant you ;
We the chief patron of the commonwealth,
You the regardless author of its woes ;
We, for the sake of liberty, a king,

You chains and bondage for a tyrant's sake.
Our love is principle, and has its root
In reason, is judicious, manly, free ;
Yours, a blind instinct, crouches to the rod,
And licks the foot that treads it in the dust.
Were kingship as true treasure as it seems,
Sterling, and worthy of a wise man's wish,
I would not be a king to be beloved
Causeless, and daubed with undiscerning praise,
Where love is mere attachment to the throne,
Not to the man who fills it as he ought.

The Task, Book V,

PATRIOTISM.

ENGLAND, with all thy faults, I love thee still,
My country ! and, while yet a nook is left
Where English minds and manners may be found,
Shall be constrained to love thee. Though thy clime
Be fickle, and thy year, most part, deformed
With dripping rains, or withered by a frost,
I would not yet exchange thy sullen skies
And fields without a flower, for warmer France
With all her vines ; nor for Ausonia's groves
Of golden fruitage, and her myrtle bowers.
To shake thy senate, and from heights sublime
Of patriot eloquence to flash down fire
Upon thy foes, was never meant my task ;
But I can feel thy fortunes, and partake
Thy joys and sorrows with as true a heart
As any thunderer there. And I can feel

Thy follies too, and with a just disdain
Frown at effeminate, whose very looks
Reflect dishonour on the land I love.
How, in the name of soldiership and sense,
Should England prosper, when such things, as smooth
And tender as a girl, all-essenced o'er
With odours, and as profligate as sweet,
Who sell their laurel for a myrtle wreath,
And love when they should fight,—when such as these
Presume to lay their hand upon the ark
Of her magnificent and awful cause?
Time was when it was praise and boast enough
In every clime, and travel where we might,
That we were born her children ; praise enough
To fill the ambition of a private man,
That Chatham's language was his mother tongue,
And Wolfe's great name compatriot with his own.
Farewell those honours, and farewell with them
The hope of such hereafter ! They have fallen
Each in his field of glory : one in arms,
And one in council—Wolfe upon the lap
Of smiling Victory that moment won,
And Chatham, heart-sick of his country's shame !
They made us many soldiers. Chatham still
Consulting England's happiness at home,
Secured it by an unforgiving frown
If any wronged her. Wolfe, where'er he fought,
Put so much of his heart into his act,
That his example had a magnet's force,
And all were swift to follow whom all loved.
Those suns are set. Oh rise some other such !
Or all that we have left is empty talk
Of old achievements, and despair of new.

The Task, Book II.

AGAINST SLAVERY.

OH for a lodge in some vast wilderness,
Some boundless contiguity of shade,
Where rumour of oppression and deceit,
Of unsuccessful or successful war,
Might never reach me more ! My ear is pain'd,
My soul is sick with every day's report
Of wrong and outrage with which earth is fill'd.
There is no flesh in man's obdurate heart—
It does not feel for man ; the natural bond
Of brotherhood is sever'd as the flax
That falls asunder at the touch of fire.
He finds his fellow guilty of a skin
Not colour'd like his own, and having power
To enforce the wrong, for such a worthy cause
Dooms and devotes him as his lawful prey.
Lands intersected by a narrow frith
Abhor each other. Mountains interposed,
Make enemies of nations, who had else
Like kindred drops been mingled into one.
Thus man devotes his brother, and destroys ;
And worse than all, and most to be deplored
As human Nature's broadest, foulest blot,
Chains him, and tasks him, and exacts his sweat
With stripes, that Mercy with a bleeding heart
Weeps when she sees inflicted on a beast.
Then what is man ? And what man seeing this,
And having human feelings, does not blush
And hang his head, to think himself a man ?
I would not have a slave to till my ground,

To carry me, to fan me while I sleep,
And tremble when I wake, for all the wealth
That sinews bought and sold have ever earn'd.
No : dear as freedom is, and in my heart's
Just estimation prized above all price,
I had much rather be myself the slave
And wear the bonds, than fasten them on him.
We have no slaves at home.—Then why abroad ?
And they themselves once ferried o'er the wave
That parts us, are emancipate and loosed.
Slaves cannot breathe in England ; if their lungs
Receive our air, that moment they are free,
They touch our country, and their shackles fall.
That's noble, and bespeaks a nation proud
And jealous of the blessing. Spread it then,
And let it circulate through every vein
Of all your empire ; that where Britain's power
Is felt, mankind may feel her mercy too.

The Task, Book II.

Heaven speed the canvas, gallantly unfurled
To furnish and accommodate a world,
To give the pole the produce of the sun,
And knit the unsocial climates into one.—
Soft airs and gentle heavings of the wave
Impel the fleet, whose errand is to save,
To succour wasted regions, and replace
The smile of opulence in sorrow's face.—
Let nothing adverse, nothing unforeseen,
Impede the bark that ploughs the deep serene,
Charged with a freight transcending in its worth
The gems of India, nature's rarest birth,
That flies, like Gabriel on his Lord's commands,
A herald of God's love to pagan lands.

But ah ! what wish can prosper, or what prayer,
For merchants rich in cargoes of despair,
Who drive a loathsome traffic, gauge and span,
And buy the muscles and the bones of man ?
The tender ties of father, husband, friend,
All bonds of nature in that moment end ;
And each endures, while yet he draws his breath,
A stroke as fatal as the scythe of death.
The sable warrior, frantic with regret
Of her he loves, and never can forget,
Loses in tears the far receding shore,
But not the thought that they must meet no
more ;

Deprived of her and freedom at a blow,
What has he left, that he can yet forego ?
Yes, to deep sadness sullenly resigned,
He feels his body's bondage in his mind ;
Puts off his generous nature ; and, to suit
His manners with his fate, puts on the brute.

O most degrading of all ills, that wait
On man, a mourner in his best estate !
All other sorrows virtue may endure,
And find submission more than half a cure ;
Grief is itself a medicine, and bestowed
To improve the fortitude that bears the load,
To teach the wanderer, as his woes increase,
The path of Wisdom, all whose paths are peace ;
But slavery !—Virtue dreads it as her grave :
Patience itself is meanness in a slave ;
Or if the will and sovereignty of God
Bid suffer it awhile, and kiss the rod,
Wait for the dawning of a brighter day,
And snap the chain the moment when you may.
Nature imprints upon whate'er we see
That has a heart and life in it, “ Be free !”

The beasts are chartered—neither age nor force
Can quell the love of freedom in a horse :
He breaks the cord that held him at the rack ;
And, conscious of an unencumbered back,
Snuffs up the morning air, forgets the rein,
Loose fly his forelock and his ample mane,
Responsive to the distant neigh he neighs,
Nor stops, till, overleaping all delays,
He finds the pasture where his fellows graze.

Canst thou, and honour'd with a Christian name,
Buy what is woman-born, and feel no shame ?
Trade in the blood of innocence, and plead
Expedience as a warrant for the deed ?
So may the wolf, whom famine has made bold
To quit the forest and invade the fold :
So may the ruffian, who with ghostly glide,
Dagger in hand, steals close to your bedside ;
Not he, but his emergence, forced the door,
He found it inconvenient to be poor.
Has God then given its sweetness to the cane,
Unless His laws be trampled on—in vain ?
Built a brave world, which cannot yet subsist,
Unless His right to rule it be dismiss'd ?
Impudent blasphemy ! So Folly pleads,
And Avarice being judge, with ease succeeds.

Charity.

THE SOUTH SEA ISLANDER.

THESE therefore I can pity, placed remote
From all that science traces, art invents,
Or inspiration teaches ; and enclosed
In boundless oceans, never to be pass'd
By navigators uninform'd as they,
Or plough'd perhaps by British bark again.
But far beyond the rest, and with most cause,
Thee, gentle savage !* whom no love of thee
Or thine, but curiosity perhaps,
Or else vain-glory, prompted us to draw
Forth from thy native bowers, to show thee here
With what superior skill we can abuse
The gifts of Providence, and squander life.
The dream is past ; and thou hast found again
Thy cocoas and bananas, palms and yams,
And homestall thatch'd with leaves. But hast thou
found
Their former charms ? And having seen our state,
Our palaces, our ladies, and our pomp
Of equipage, our gardens, and our sports,
And heard our music ; are thy simple friends,
Thy simple fare, and all thy plain delights
As dear to thee as once ? And have thy joys
Lost nothing by comparison with ours ?
Rude as thou art (for we return'd thee rude
And ignorant, except of outward show),
I cannot think thee yet so dull of heart
And spiritless, as never to regret

* Omai, interpreter to Captain Cook in his third voyage.

Sweets tasted here, and left as soon as known.
Methinks I see thee straying on the beach,
And asking of the surge that bathes thy foot
If ever it has washed our distant shore.
I see thee weep, and thine are honest tears,
A patriot's for his country : thou art sad
At thought of her forlorn and abject state,
From which no power of thine can raise her up.
Thus fancy paints thee, and, though apt to err,
Perhaps errs little when she paints thee thus.
She tells me too, that duly every morn
Thou climb'st the mountain top, with eager eye
Exploring far and wide the watery waste
For sight of ship from England. Every speck
Seen in the dim horizon turns thee pale
With conflict of contending hopes and fears.
But comes at last the dull and dusky eve,
And sends thee to thy cabin, well prepared
To dream all night of what the day denied.
Alas ! expect it not. We found no bait
To tempt us in thy country. Doing good,
Disinterested good, is not our trade.
We travel far, 'tis true, but not for nought ;
And must be bribed to compass earth again
By other hopes and richer fruits than yours.

The Task, Book

PITY FOR POOR AFRICANS.

Video meliora proboque,
Deteriora sequor.—

I OWN I am shocked at the purchase of slaves,
And fear those who buy them and sell them are knaves ;
What I hear of their hardships, their tortures, and groans
Is almost enough to draw pity from stones.

I pity them greatly, but I must be mum,
For how could we do without sugar and rum ?
Especially sugar, so needful we see ;
What ! give up our desserts, our coffee, and tea ?

Besides, if we do, the French, Dutch, and Danes,
Will heartily thank us, no doubt, for our pains :
If we do not buy the poor creatures, they will ;
And tortures and groans will be multiplied still.

If foreigners likewise would give up the trade,
Much more in behalf of your wish might be said ;
But while they get riches by purchasing blacks,
Pray tell me why we may not also go snacks ?

Your scruples and arguments bring to my mind
A story so pat, you may think it is coined,
On purpose to answer you, out of my mint ;
But I can assure you I saw it in print.

A youngster at school, more sedate than the rest,
Had once his integrity put to the test ;
His comrades had plotted an orchard to rob,
And asked him to go and assist in the job.

He was shocked, sir, like you, and answered—"Oh, no !
What ! rob our good neighbour ? I pray you don't go ;
Besides, the man's poor, his orchard's his bread :
Then think of his children, for they must be fed."

"You speak very fine, and you look very grave,
But apples we want, and apples we'll have :
If you will go with us, you shall have a share ;
If not, you shall have neither apple nor pear."

They spoke, and Tom pondered—"I see they will go :
Poor man ! what a pity to injure him so !
Poor man ! I would save him his fruit if I could,
But staying behind will do him no good.

"If the matter depended alone upon me,
His apples might hang till they dropped from the tree ;
But since they will take them, I think I'll go too ;
He will lose none by me, though I get a few."

His scruples thus silenced, Tom felt more at ease,
And went with his comrades the apples to seize ;
He blamed and protested, but joined in the plan ;
He shared in the plunder, but pitied the man.

THE MORNING DREAM.

'Twas in the glad season of spring,
Asleep at the dawn of the day,
I dreamed what I cannot but sing,
So pleasant it seemed as I lay.

I dreamed that, on ocean afloat,
Far hence to the westward I sailed,
While the billows high-lifted the boat,
And the fresh-blowing breeze never failed.

In the steerage a woman I saw ;
Such at least was the form that she wore,
Whose beauty impressed me with awe,
Never taught me by woman before.
She sat, and a shield at her side
Shed light, like a sun on the waves,
And smiling divinely, she cried—
“ I go to make freemen of slaves.”

Then raising her voice to a strain
The sweetest that ear ever heard,
She sang of the slave's broken chain
Wherever her glory appeared.
Some clouds, which had over us hung,
Fled, chased by her melody clear,
And methought while she liberty sung,
'Twas liberty only to hear.

Thus swiftly dividing the flood,
To a slave-cultured island we came,
Where a Demon, her enemy, stood—
Oppression his terrible name.
In his hand, as the sign of his sway,
A scourge hung with lashes he bore,
And stood looking out for his prey
From Africa's sorrowful shore.

But soon as approaching the land,
That goddess-like woman he viewed,
The scourge he let fall from his hand,
With blood of his subjects imbrued.

I saw him both sicken and die,
And, the moment the monster expired,
Heard shouts that ascended the sky,
From thousands with rapture inspired.

Awaking, how could I but muse
At what such a dream should betide?
But soon my ear caught the glad news,
Which served my weak thought for a guide,—
That Britannia, renowned o'er the waves
For the hatred she ever has shown
To the black-sceptred rulers of slaves,
Resolves to have none of her own.

PORTRAITS AND
CHARACTERS.

THE KING.

OH ! bright occasions of dispensing good,
How seldom used, how little understood !
To pour in Virtue's lap her just reward ;
Keep Vice restrain'd behind a double guard ;
To quell the faction that affronts the throne
By silent magnanimity alone ;
To nurse with tender care the thriving arts,
Watch every beam philosophy imparts ;
To give Religion her unbridled scope,
Nor judge by statute a believer's hope ;
With close fidelity and love unfeigned
To keep the matrimonial bond unstain'd ;
Covetous only of a virtuous praise ;
His life a lesson to the land he sways ;
To touch the sword with conscientious awe,
Nor draw it but when duty bids him draw ;
To sheath it in the peace-restoring close
With joy beyond what victory bestows—
Blest country ! where these kingly glories shine ;
Blest England ! if this happiness be thine.

Table-Talk.

THE STATESMAN.

(CHATHAM.)

IN him, Demosthenes was heard again,
Liberty taught him her Athenian strain ;
She clothed him with authority and awe,
Spoke from his lips, and in his looks gave law.
His speech, his form, his action, full of grace,
And all his country beaming in his face,
He stood, as some inimitable hand
Would strive to make a Paul or Tully stand.
No sycophant or slave that dared oppose
Her sacred cause, but trembled when he rose,
And every venal stickler for the yoke
Felt himself crushed at the first word he spoke.
Table-Talk.

THE SOLDIER.

LET laurels, drenched in pure Parnassian dews,
Reward his memory, dear to every muse,
Who, with a courage of unshaken root,
In honour's field advancing his firm foot,
Plants it upon the line that justice draws,
And will prevail or perish in her cause.
And when recording History displays
Feats of renown, though wrought in ancient days,
Tells of a few stout hearts that fought and died
Whose duty placed them, at their country's side, -

The man that is not moved with what he reads,
That takes not fire at their heroic deeds,
Unworthy of the blessings of the brave,
Is base in kind, and born to be a slave.

Table-Talk.

THE POET.

I KNOW the mind that feels indeed the fire
The Muse imparts, and can command the lyre,
Acts with a force, and kindles with a zeal,
Whate'er the theme, that others never feel.
She pours a sensibility divine
Along the nerve of every feeling line.
But if a deed not tamely to be borne,
Fire indignation and a sense of scorn,
The strings are swept with such a power, so loud,
The storm of music shakes th' astonish'd crowd.
So, when remote futurity is brought
Before the keen inquiry of her thought,
A terrible sagacity informs
The poet's heart ; he looks to distant storms,
He hears the thunder ere the tempest lowers,
And, armed with strength surpassing human powers,
Seizes events as yet unknown to man,
And darts his soul into the dawning plan.
Hence, in a Roman mouth, the graceful name
Of prophet and of poet was the same.

Table-Talk.

THE MAN OF THE WORLD.

(CHESTERFIELD.)

PETRONIUS ! all the Muses weep for thee,
But every tear shall scald thy memory.
The Graces too, while Virtue at their shrine
Lay bleeding under that soft hand of thine,
Felt each a mortal stab in her own breast,
Abhorred the sacrifice, and cursed the priest :
Thou polished and high-finished foe to truth,
Gray-beard corrupter of our listening youth,
To purge and skim away the filth of vice,
That so refined it might the more entice,
Then pour it on the morals of thy son
To taint *his* heart, was worthy of *thine own*.
Now while the poison all high life pervades,
Write if thou canst one letter from the shades,
One, and one only, charged with deep regret,
That thy worst part, thy principles, live yet ;
One sad epistle thence may cure mankind
Of the plague spread by bundles left behind.
Progress of Error.

THE PRUDE.

YON ancient prude, whose withered features show
She might be young some forty years ago,
Her elbows pinioned close upon her hips,
Her head erect, her fan upon her lips,

Her eyebrows arched, her eyes both gone astray
 To watch yon amorous couple in their play,
 With bony and unkerchiefed neck defies
 The rude inclemency of wintry skies,
 And sails with lappet-head and mincing airs,
 Duly at clink of bell, to morning prayers.
 To thrift and parsimony much inclined,
 She yet allows herself that boy behind ;
 The shivering urchin, bending as he goes,
 With slipshod heels, and dew-drop at his nose,
 His predecessor's coat advanced to wear,
 Which future pages are yet doomed to share,
 Carries her Bible tucked beneath his arm,
 And hides his hands to keep his fingers warm.

She, half an angel in her own account,
 Doubts not hereafter with the saints to mount,
 Though not a grace appears on strictest search,
 But that she fasts, and, *item*, goes to church.
 Conscious of age, she recollects her youth,
 And tells, not always with an eye to truth,
 Who spanned her waist, and who, where'er he came,
 Scrawled upon glass Miss Bridget's lovely name,
 Who stole her slipper, filled it with Tokay,
 And drank the little bumper every day.
 Of temper as envenomed as an asp,
 Censorious, and her every word a wasp
 In faithful memory she records the crimes,
 Or real or fictitious, of the times ;
 Laughs at the reputations she has torn,
 And holds them dangling at arm's length in scorn.

Truth.

THE PHILOSOPHER AND PEASANT.

THE Frenchman first in literary fame
 ("Mention him, if you please—Voltaire?"—The same),
 With spirit, genius, eloquence supplied,
 Lived long, wrote much, laughed heartily, and died :
 The Scripture was his jest-book, whence he drew
Bon mots to gall the Christian and the Jew ;
 An infidel in health, but what when sick ?
 Oh—then a text would touch him at the quick :
 View him at Paris in his last career ;
 Surrounding throngs the demigod revere,
 Exalted on his pedestal of pride,
 And fumed with frankincense on every side,
 He begs their flattery with his latest breath,
 And smothered in't at last, is praised to death.

Yon cottager, who weaves at her own door,
 Pillow and bobbins all her little store ;
 Content though mean, and cheerful if not gay,
 Shuffling her threads about the live-long day,
 Just earns a scanty pittance, and at night
 Lies down secure, her heart and pocket light.
 She, for her humble sphere by nature fit,
 Has little understanding, and no wit,
 Receives no praise ; but though her lot be such
 (Toilsome and indigent), she renders much ;
 Just knows, and knows no more, her Bible true—
 A truth the brilliant Frenchman never knew ;
 And in that charter reads with sparkling eyes
 Her title to a treasure in the skies.

O happy peasant ! O unhappy bard !
 His the mere tinsel, hers the rich reward ;
 He praised perhaps for ages yet to come,
 She never heard of half a mile from home :
 He lost in errors his vain heart prefers,
 She safe in the simplicity of hers.

Truth.

THE RELIGIOUS REFORMER.

(WHITFIELD.)

LEUCONOMUS (beneath well-sounding Greek
 I slur a name a poet must not speak)
 Stood pilloried on infamy's high stage,
 And bore the pelting scorn of half an age ;
 The very butt of slander, and the blot
 For every dart that malice ever shot.
 The man that mentioned *him* at once dismissed
 All mercy from his lips, and sneered, and hissed ;
 His crimes were such as Sodom never knew,
 And Perjury stood up to swear all true ;
 His aim was mischief, and his zeal pretence,
 His speech rebellion against common sense ;
 A knave, when tried on honesty's plain rule,
 And when by that of reason, a mere fool ;
 The world's best comfort was, his doom was passed,
 Die when he might, he must be damned at last.

Now, Truth, perform thine office ; waft aside
 The curtain drawn by prejudice and pride,
 Reveal (the man is dead) to wondering eyes
 This more than monster in his proper guise.

He loved the world that hated him : the tear
 That dropped upon his Bible was sincere :

Assailed by scandal and the tongue of strife,
 His only answer was a blameless life ;
 And he that forged, and he that threw the dart,
 Had each a brother's interest in his heart.
 Paul's love of Christ, and steadiness unbribed,
 Were copied close in him, and well transcribed.
 He followed Paul ; his zeal a kindred flame,
 His apostolic charity the same.
 Like him, crossed cheerfully tempestuous seas,
 Forsaking country, kindred, friends, and ease ;
 Like him he laboured, and like him content
 To bear it, suffered shame where'er he went.
 Blush, Calumny ; and write upon his tomb,
 If honest eulogy can spare thee room,
 Thy deep repentance of thy thousand lies,
 Which, aimed at him, have pierced the offended skies !
 And say, " Blot out my sin, confessed, deplored,
 Against Thine image in Thy saint, O Lord !"

Hope.

THE CHRISTIAN.

A CHRISTIAN'S wit is inoffensive light,
 A beam that aids but never grieves the sight ;
 Vigorous in age as in the flush of youth,
 'Tis always active on the side of truth ;
 Temperance and peace insure its healthful state,
 And make it brightest at its latest date.
 Oh I have seen (nor hope perhaps in vain,
 Ere life go down, to see such sights again)
 A veteran warrior in the Christian field,
 Who never saw the sword he could not wield ;

Grave without dulness, learned without pride,
 Exact, yet not precise, though meek, keen-eyed ;
 A man that would have foiled at their own play
 A dozen would-be's of the modern day ;
 Who, when occasion justified its use,
 Had wit as bright as ready to produce,
 Could fetch from records of an earlier age,
 Or from philosophy's enlightened page,
 His rich materials, and regale your ear
 With strains it was a privilege to hear !
 Yet above all his luxury supreme,
 And his chief glory, was the gospel theme ;
 There he was copious as old Greece or Rome,
 His happy eloquence seemed there at home,
 Ambitious not to shine or to excel,
 But to treat justly what he loved so well.

Conversation.

THE PHILANTHROPIST.

PATRON of else the most despised of men,
 Accept the tribute of a stranger's pen ;
 Verse, like the laurel, its immortal meed,
 Should be the guerdon of a noble deed ;
 I may alarm thee, but I fear the shame
 (Charity chosen as my theme and aim)
 I must incur, forgetting HOWARD's name.
 Blest with all wealth can give thee, to resign
 Joys doubly sweet to feelings quick as thine,
 To quit the bliss thy rural scenes bestow,
 To seek a nobler amidst scenes of woe,

To traverse seas, range kingdoms, and bring home
 Not the proud monuments of Greece or Rome,
 But knowledge such as only dungeons teach,
 And only sympathy like thine could reach ;
 That grief, sequestered from the public stage,
 Might smooth her feathers, and enjoy her cage ;
 Speaks a divine ambition, and a zeal,
 The boldest patriot might be proud to feel.
 Oh that the voice of clamour and debate,
 That pleads for peace till it disturbs the State,
 Were hushed in favour of thy generous plea,
 The poor thy clients, and Heaven's smile thy fee ! .
Charity.

THE WEARY STATESMAN.

‘ YE groves,” the statesman at his desk exclaims,
 Sick of a thousand disappointed aims,
 ‘ My patrimonial treasure and my pride,
 Beneath your shades your gray possessor hide,
 Receive me languishing for that repose
 The servant of the public never knows.
 Ye saw me once (ah those regretted days,
 When boyish innocence was all my praise !)
 Hour after hour delightfully allot
 To studies then familiar, since forgot,
 And cultivate a taste for ancient song,
 Catching its ardour as I mused along ;
 Nor seldom, as propitious Heaven might send,
 What once I valued and could boast, a friend,

Were witnesses how cordially I pressed
 His undissembling virtue to my breast ;
 Receive me now, not uncorrupt as then,
 Nor guiltless of corrupting other men,
 But versed in arts, that, while they seem to stay
 A fallen empire, hasten its decay.
 To the fair haven of my native home,
 The wreck of what I was, fatigued I come ;
 For once I can approve the patriot's voice,
 And make the course he recommends my choice :
 We meet at last in one sincere desire,
 His wish and mine both prompt me to retire."

'Tis done—he steps into the welcome chaise,
 Lolls at his ease behind four handsome bays,
 That whirl away from business and debate
 The disencumbered Atlas of the state.
 Ask not the boy, who, when the breeze of morn
 First shakes the glittering drops from every thorn,
 Unfolds his flock, then under bank or bush
 Sits linking cherry-stones, or plating rush,
 How fair is freedom?—he was always free :
 To carve his rustic name upon a tree,
 To snare the mole, or with ill-fashioned hook
 To draw the incautious minnow from the brook,
 Are life's prime pleasures in his simple view,
 His flock the chief concern he ever knew ;
 But ask the noble drudge in state affairs,
 Escaped from office and its constant cares,
 What charms he sees in freedom's smile expressed,
 In freedom lost so long, now repossessed ;
 The tongue, whose strains were cogent as com-
 mands,
 Revered at home, and felt in foreign lands,
 Shall own itself a stammerer in that cause,
 Or plead its silence as its best applause.

He knows indeed that, whether dressed or rude,
 Wild without art, or artfully subdued,
 Nature in every form inspires delight,
 But never marked her with so just a sight.
 Her hedge-row shrubs, a variegated store,
 With woodbine and wild roses mantled o'er,
 Green balks and furrowed lands, the stream that spreads
 Its cooling vapour o'er the dewy meads,
 Downs, that almost escape the inquiring eye,
 That melt and fade into the distant sky,
 Beauties he lately slighted as he passed,
 Seem all created since he travelled last.
 Master of all the enjoyments he designed,
 No rough annoyance rankling in his mind,
 What early philosophic hours he keeps,
 How regular his meals, how sound he sleeps !
 Not sounder he that on the mainmast head,
 While morning kindles with a windy red,
 Begins a long look-out for distant land,
 Nor quits till evening-watch his giddy stand,
 Then swift descending with a seaman's haste,
 Slips to his hammock, and forgets the blast.
 He chooses company, but not the squire's,
 Whose wit is rudeness, whose good breeding tires ;
 Nor yet the parson's, who would gladly come,
 Obsequious when abroad, though proud at home ;
 Nor can he much affect the neighbouring peer,
 Whose toe of emulation treads too near ;
 But wisely seeks a more convenient friend,
 With whom, dismissing forms, he may unbend :
 A man whom marks of condescending grace
 Teach, while they flatter him, his proper place :
 Who comes when called, and at a word withdraws,
 Speaks with reserve, and listens with applause ;

Yet how fallacious is all earthly bliss,
 What obvious truths the wisest heads may miss !
 Some pleasures live a month, and some a year,
 But short the date of all we gather here ;
 No happiness is felt except the true,
 That does not charm the more for being new.
 This observation, as it chanced, not made,
 Or, if the thought occur'd not duly weigh'd,
 He sighs—for after all, by slow degrees,
 The spot he loved has lost the power to please ;
 To cross his ambling pony day by day
 Seems at the best but dreaming life away ;
 The prospect, such as might enchant despair,
 He views it not, or sees no beauty there ;
 With aching heart, and discontented looks,
 Returns at noon to billiards or to books,
 But feels, while grasping at his faded joys,
 A secret thirst of his renounced employs.
 He chides the tardiness of every post,
 Pants to be told of battles won or lost,
 Blames his own indolence, observes, though late,
 'Tis criminal to leave a sinking State,
 Flies to the levee, and, received with grace,
 Kneels, kisses hands, and shines again in place.

Retirement.

THE LOVER.

THE lover too shuns business and alarms,
 Tender idolater of absent charms.
 Saints offer nothing in their warmest prayers,
 That he devotes not with a zeal like theirs ;

'Tis consecration of his heart, soul, time,
 And every thought that wanders is a crime.
 In sighs he worships his supremely fair,
 And weeps a sad libation in despair,
 Adores a creature, and devout in vain,
 Wins in return an answer of disdain.
 As woodbine weds the plant within her reach,
 Rough elm, or smooth-grain'd ash, or glossy
 beech,
 In spiral rings ascends the trunk, and lays
 Her golden tassels on the leafy sprays,
 But does a mischief while she lends a grace,
 Straitening its growth by such a strict embrace,
 So love, that clings around the noblest minds,
 Forbids the advancement of the soul he binds ;
 The suitor's air indeed he soon improves,
 And forms it to the taste of her he loves,
 Teaches his eyes a language, and no less
 Refines his speech and fashions his address ;
 But farewell promises of happier fruits,
 Manly designs, and learning's grave pursuits,
 Girt with a chain he cannot wish to break,
 His only bliss is sorrow for her sake ;
 Who will may pant for glory and excel,
 Her smile his aim, all higher aims farewell !
 Thyrsis, Alexis, or whatever name
 May least offend against so pure a flame,
 Though sage advice of friends the most sincere
 Sounds harshly in so delicate an ear,
 And lovers, of all creatures, tame or wild,
 Can least brook management, however mild,
 Yet let a poet (poetry disarms
 The fiercest animals with magic charms)
 Risk an intrusion on thy pensive mood,
 And woo and win thee to thy proper good.

Pastoral images and still retreats,
 Umbrageous walks and solitary seats,
 Sweet birds in concert with harmonious streams,
 Soft airs, nocturnal vigils, and day-dreams,
 Are all enchantments in a case like thine,
 Conspire against thy peace with one design,
 Soothe thee to make thee but a surer prey,
 And feed the fire that wastes thy powers away.
 Up—God has formed thee with a wiser view,
 Not to be led in chains, but to subdue ;
 Calls thee to cope with enemies, and first
 Points out a conflict with thyself, the worst.
 Woman indeed, a gift He would bestow
 When He designed a paradise below,
 The richest earthly boon His hands afford,
 Deserves to be beloved, but not adored.
 Post away swiftly to more active scenes,
 Collect the scattered truths that study gleans,
 Mix with the world, but with its wiser part,
 No longer give an image all thine heart ;
 Its empire is not hers, nor is it thine,
 'Tis God's just claim, prerogative divine.

Retirement.

CLERGYMEN GOOD AND BAD.

I VENERATE the man whose heart is warm,
 Whose hands are pure, whose doctrine and whose life
 Coincident, exhibit lucid proof
 That he is honest in the sacred cause.
 But loose in morals, and in manners vain,

In conversation frivolous, in dress
 Extreme, at once rapacious and profuse,
 Constant at routs, familiar with a round
 Of ladyships, a stranger to the poor ;
 Ambitious of preferment for its gold,
 And well prepared by ignorance and sloth
 By infidelity and love o' the world,
 To make God's work a sinecure ; a slave
 To his own pleasures and his patron's pride :—
 From such apostles, O ye mitred heads,
 Preserve the church ! and lay not careless hands
 On skulls that cannot teach, and will not learn.

Would I describe a preacher, such as Paul,
 Were he on earth, would hear, approve, and own,
 Paul should himself direct me. I would trace
 His master-strokes, and draw from his design.
 I would express him simple, grave, sincere ;
 In doctrine uncorrupt ; in language plain,
 And plain in manner ; decent, solemn, chaste,
 And natural in gesture ; much impressed
 Himself, as conscious of his awful charge,
 And anxious mainly that the flock he feeds
 May feel it too ; affectionate in look,
 And tender in address, as well becomes
 A messenger of grace to guilty men.

The Task, Book II.

THE RECLUSE.

HE is the happy man, whose life even now
 Shows somewhat of that happier life to come ;
 Who, doomed to an obscure but tranquil state,
 Is pleased with it, and, were he free to choose,
 Would make his fate his choice ; whom peace, the fruit
 Of virtue, and whom virtue, fruit of faith,
 Prepare for happiness ; bespeak him one
 Content indeed to sojourn while he must
 Below the skies, but having there his home.
 The world o'erlooks him in her busy search
 Of objects more illustrious in her view ;
 And occupied as earnestly as she,
 Though more sublimely, he o'erlooks the world.
 She scorns his pleasures, for she knows them not ;
 He seeks not hers, for he has proved them vain.
 He cannot skim the ground like summer birds
 Pursuing gilded flies, and such he deems
 Her honours, her emoluments, her joys.
 Therefore in contemplation is his bliss,
 Whose power is such, that whom she lifts from earth
 She makes familiar with a heaven unseen,
 And shows him glories yet to be revealed.
 Not slothful he, though seeming unemployed,
 And censured oft as useless. Stillest streams
 Oft water fairest meadows, and the bird
 That flutters least is longest on the wing.
 Ask him, indeed, what trophies he has raised,
 Or what achievements of immortal fame
 He purposes, and he shall answer—None.

His warfare is within. There unfatigued
 His fervent spirit labours. There he fights,
 And there obtains fresh triumphs o'er himself,
 And never-withering wreaths, compared with which
 The laurels that a Cæsar reaps are weeds.
 Perhaps the self-approving haughty world,
 That as she sweeps him with her whistling silks
 Scarce deigns to notice him, or, if she see,
 Deems him a cipher in the works of God,
 Receives advantage from his noiseless hours,
 Of which she little dreams. Perhaps she owes
 Her sunshine and her rain, her blooming spring
 And plenteous harvest, to the prayer he makes,
 When, Isaac-like, the solitary saint
 Walks forth to meditate at eventide,
 And think on her, who thinks not for herself.
 Forgive him then, thou bustler in concerns
 Of little worth, and idler in the best,
 If, author of no mischief and some good,
 He seeks his proper happiness by means
 That may advance, but cannot hinder, thine.

The Task, Book VI.

THE MAN OF FASHION.

To rise at noon, sit slipshod and undressed,
 To read the news, or fiddle, as seems best,
 Till half the world comes rattling at his door,
 To fill the dull vacuity till four ;
 And, just when evening turns the blue vault gray,
 To spend two hours in dressing for the day ;
 To make the sun a bauble without use,
 Save for the fruits his heavenly beams produce :
 Quite to forget, or deem it worth no thought
 Who bids him shine, or if he shine or not ;
 Through mere necessity to close his eyes
 Just when the larks and when the shepherds rise ;
 Is such a life, so tediously the same,
 So void of all utility or aim,
 That poor Jonquil, with almost every breath,
 Sighs for his exit, vulgarly called death ;
 For he, with all his follies, has a mind
 Not yet so blank, or fashionably blind,
 But now and then perhaps a feeble ray
 Of distant wisdom shoots across his way,
 By which he reads, that life without a plan,
 As useless as the moment it began,
 Serves merely as a soil for discontent
 To thrive in ; an incumbrance ere half spent.

Hope.

THE HYPOCHONDRIAC.

VIRTUOUS and faithful IIEBERDEN, whose skill
 Attempts no task it cannot well fulfil,
 Gives melancholy up to nature's care,
 And sends the patient into purer air.
 Look where he comes—in this embowered alcove,
 Stand close concealed, and see a statue move :
 Lips busy, and eyes fixed, foot falling slow,
 Arms hanging idly down, hands clasped below,
 Interpret to the marking eye distress,
 Such as its symptoms can alone express.
 That tongue is silent now ; that silent tongue
 Could argue once, could jest or join the song,
 Could give advice, could censure or commend,
 Or charm the sorrows of a drooping friend.
 Renounced alike its office and its sport,
 Its brisker and its graver strains fall short ;
 Both fail beneath a fever's secret sway,
 And like a summer brook are past away.
 This is a sight for Pity to peruse,
 Till she resemble faintly what she views,
 Till Sympathy contract a kindred pain,
 Pierced with the woes that she laments in vain.
 This, of all maladies that man infest,
 Claims most compassion, and receives the least :
 Job felt it, when he groaned beneath the rod
 And the barbed arrows of a frowning God ;
 And such emollients as his friends could spare,
 Friends such as his for modern Jobs prepare.

Retirement.

A SCHOLAR.

ALL are not such. I had a brother once—
 Peace to the memory of a man of worth,
 A man of letters, and of manners too ;
 Of manners sweet as virtue always wears
 When gay good-nature dresses her in smiles.
 He graced a college, in which order yet
 Was sacred ; and was honoured, loved, and wept
 By more than one, themselves conspicuous there.
 Some minds are tempered happily, and mixed
 With such ingredients of good sense and taste
 Of what is excellent in man, they thirst
 With such a zeal to be what they approve,
 That no restraints can circumscribe them more
 Than they themselves by choice, for wisdom's sake.
 Nor can example hurt them ; what they see
 Of vice in others but enhancing more
 The charms of virtue in their just esteem.

The Task, Book II.

THE RECRUIT.

'Tis universal soldiership has stabbed
 The heart of merit in the meaner class.
 Arms, through the vanity and brainless rage
 Of those that bear them, in whatever cause,
 Seem most at variance with all moral good,
 And incompatible with serious thought.
 The clown, the child of nature, without guile,
 Blest with an infant's ignorance of all
 But his own simple pleasures, now and then
 A wrestling-match, a foot-race, or a fair,
 Is balloted, and trembles at the news :
 Sheepish he doffs his hat, and mumbling swears
 A Bible-oath to be whate'er they please,
 To do he knows not what. The task performed,
 That instant he becomes the sergeant's care,
 His pupil, and his torment, and his jest.
 His awkward gait, his introverted toes,
 Bent knees, round shoulders, and dejected looks,
 Procure him many a curse. By slow degrees,
 Unapt to learn, and formed of stubborn stuff,
 He yet by slow degrees puts off himself,
 Grows conscious of a change, and likes it well ;
 He stands erect ; his slouch becomes a walk ;
 He steps right onward, martial in his air,
 His form, and movement ; is as smart above
 As meal and larded locks can make him ; wears
 His hat, or his plumed helmet, with a grace ;
 And, his three years of heroship expired,
 Returns indignant to the slighted plough.

He hates the field, in which no fife or drum
 Attends him, drives his cattle to a march,
 And sighs for the smart comrades he has left.
 'Twere well if his exterior change were all—
 But with his clumsy port the wretch has lost
 His ignorance and harmless manners too.
 To swear, to game, to drink, to show at home
 By lewdness, idleness, and Sabbath breach,
 The great proficiency he made abroad,
 To astonish and to grieve his gazing friends,
 To break some maiden's and his mother's heart,
 To be a pest where he was useful once,
 Are his sole aim, and all his glory now,
The Task, Book IV.

MUSICIANS AND THE FIDDLING PARSON.

HARK ! how it floats upon the dewy air !
 Oh what a dying, dying close was there !
 'Tis harmony from yon sequestered bower,
 Sweet harmony, that soothes the midnight hour !
 Long ere the charioteer of day had run
 His morning course, the enchantment was begun ;
 And he shall gild yon mountain's height again,
 Ere yet the pleasing toil becomes a pain.
 Is this the rugged path, the steep ascent
 That Virtue points to? Can a life thus spent
 Lead to the bliss she promises the wise,
 Detach the soul from earth, and speed her to the
 .skies?

Ye devotees to your adored employ,
 Enthusiasts, drunk with an unreal joy,
 Love makes the music of the blest above,
 Heaven's harmony is universal love ;
 And earthly sounds, though sweet and well combined,
 And lenient as soft opiates to the mind,
 Leave vice and folly unsubdued behind.

Occiduus is a pastor of renown ;
 When he has prayed and preached the Sabbath down,
 With wire and catgut he concludes the day,
 Quavering and semiquavering care away.
 The full concerto swells upon your ear ;
 All elbows shake. Look in, and you would swear
 The Babylonian tyrant with a nod
 Had summoned them to serve his golden god ;
 So well that thought the employment seems to suit,
 Psaltery and sackbut, dulcimer and flute.
 Oh fie ! 'Tis evangelical and pure ;
 Observe each face, how sober and demure !
 Ecstasy sets her stamp on every mien,
 Chins fallen, and not an eye-ball to be seen.
 Still I insist, though music heretofore
 Has charmed me much (not even Occiduus more),
 Love, joy, and peace make harmony more meet
 For Sabbath evenings, and perhaps as sweet.

The Progress of Error.

SPORTSMAN AND HUNTING PRIESTS.

GRAY dawn appears ; the sportsman and his train,
 Speckle the bosom of the distant plain ;
 'Tis he, the Nimrod of the labouring lairs,—
 Save that his scent is less acute than theirs,
 For persevering chase, and headlong leaps,
 True beagle as the staunchest hound he keeps.
 Charged with the folly of his life's mad scene,
 He takes offence, and wonders what you mean ;
 The joy, the danger, and the toil o'erpays—
 'Tis exercise, and health, and length of days.
 Again impetuous to the field he flies ;
 Leaps every fence but one, there falls and dies ;
 Like a slain deer, the tumbrel brings him home,
 Unmissed but by his dogs and by his groom.

Ye clergy, while your orbit is your place,
 Lights of the world, and stars of human race ;
 But if eccentric ye forsake your sphere,
 Prodigies ominous, and viewed with fear ;
 The comet's baneful influence is a dream ;
 Yours real and pernicious in the extreme.
 What then !—are appetites and lusts laid down
 With the same ease the man puts on his gown ?
 Will Avarice and Concupiscence give place,
 Charmed by the sounds—"Your reverence," or "Your
 grace" ?

No. But his own engagement binds him fast ;
 Or, if it does not, brands him to the last
 What atheists call him—a designing knave,
 A mere church juggler, hypocrite, and slave.

Oh laugh, or mourn with me, the rueful jest,
 A cassocked huntsman, and a fiddling priest !
 He from Italian songsters takes his cue ;
 Set Paul to music, he shall quote him too.
 He takes the field, the master of the pack
 Cries—"Well done, Saint !" and claps him on the back.
 Is this the path of sanctity ? Is this
 To stand a way-mark in the road to bliss ?
 Himself a wanderer from the narrow way,
 His silly sheep, what wonder if they stray ?
 Go, cast your orders at your Bishop's feet,
 Send your dishonoured gown to Monmouth Street,
 The sacred function, in your hands is made—
 Sad sacrilege ! no function, but a trade !

The Progress of Error.

THE TRAVELLED YOUTH.

FROM school to Cam or Isis, and thence home,
 And thence with all convenient speed to Rome,
 With reverend tutor, clad in habit lay,
 To tease for cash, and quarrel with all day ;
 With memorandum-book for every town,
 And every post, and where the chaise broke down ;
 His stock, a few French phrases got by heart,
 With much to learn, but nothing to impart,
 The youth, obedient to his sire's commands,
 Sets off a wanderer into foreign lands ;
 Surprised at all they meet, the gosling pair,
 With awkward gait, stretched neck, and silly stare,
 Discover huge cathedrals built with stone,
 And steeples towering high, much like our own,

But show peculiar light, by many a grin
At Popish practices observed within.

Ere long some bowing, smirking, smart Abbé
Remarks two loiterers that have lost their way,
And being always primed with *politesse*
For men of their appearance and address,
With much compassion undertakes the task
To tell them more than they have wit to ask ;
Points to inscriptions wheresoe'er they tread,
Such as, when legible, were never read,
But being cankered now, and half worn out,
Craze antiquarian brains with endless doubt ;
Some headless hero, or some Cæsar, shows—
Defective only in his Roman nose ;
Exhibits elevations, drawings, plans,
Models of Herculeanean pots and pans,
And sells them medals, which, if neither rare
Nor ancient, will be so, preserved with care.

Strange the recital ! from whatever cause
His great improvement and new lights he draws,
The squire, once bashful, is shamefaced no more,
But teems with powers he never felt before ;
Whether increased momentum, and the force
With which from clime to clime he sped his course,
As axles sometimes kindle as they go,
Chafed him, and brought dull nature to a glow ;
Or whether clearer skies and softer air,
That make Italian flowers so sweet and fair,
Freshening his lazy spirits as he ran,
Unfolded genially and spread the man ;
Returning, he proclaims by many a grace,
By shrugs and strange contortions of his face,
How much a dunce that has been sent to roam
Excels a dunce that has been kept at home.

The Progress of Error.

RELIGIOUS DISCUSSIONS—SIR SMUG.

“ADIEU,” Vinosa cries, ere yet he sips
 The purple bumper trembling at his lips,
 “Adieu to all morality ! if Grace
 Make works a vain ingredient in the case.
 The Christian hope is—Waiter, draw the cork—
 If I mistake not—Blockhead ! with a fork !
 Without good works, whatever some may boast,
 Mere folly and delusion—Sir, your toast.
 My firm persuasion is, at least sometimes,
 That Heaven will weigh man’s virtues and his
 crimes

With nice attention in a righteous scale,
 And save, or damn, as these or those prevail.
 I plant my foot upon this ground of trust,
 And silence every fear with—God is just.
 But if perchance on some dull drizzling day
 A thought intrude, that says, or seems to say,
 If thus the important cause is to be tried,
 Suppose the beam should dip on the wrong side ?
 I soon recover from these needless frights,
 And, God is merciful !—sets all to rights.
 Thus between justice, as my prime support,
 And mercy, fled to as the last resort,
 I glide and steal along with heaven in view,
 And,—pardon me, the bottle stands with you.”

“I never will believe,” the Colonel cries,
 “The sanguinary schemes that some devise,
 Who make the good Creator, on their plan,
 A being of less equity than man.

If appetite, or what divines call lust,
 Which men comply with, even because they must,
 Be punish'd with perdition, who is pure?
 Then theirs, no doubt, as well as mine, is sure.
 If sentence of eternal pain belong
 To every sudden slip and transient wrong,
 Then Heaven enjoins the fallible and frail
 A hopeless task, and damns them if they fail.
 My creed (whatever some creed-makers mean
 By Athanasian nonsense, or Nicene),
 My creed is, he is safe that does his best,
 And death's a doom sufficient for the rest."

"Right," says an Ensign; "and for aught I see,
 Your faith and mine substantially agree;
 The best of every man's performance here
 Is to discharge the duties of his sphere.
 A lawyer's dealings should be just and fair,
 Honesty shines with great advantage there;
 Fasting and prayer sit well upon a priest,
 A decent caution and reserve at least;
 A soldier's best is courage in the field,
 With nothing here that wants to be concealed;
 Manly deportment, gallant, easy, gay;
 A hand as liberal as the light of day.
 The soldier thus endowed, who never shrinks
 Nor closets up his thought, whate'er he thinks,
 Who scorns to do an injury by stealth,
 Must go to heaven—and I must drink his health.
 Sir Smug," he cries (for lowest at the board,
 Just made fifth chaplain of his patron lord,
 His shoulders witnessing by many a shrug
 How much his feelings suffered, sat Sir Smug),
 Your office is to winnow false from true;
 Come, prophet, drink, and tell us, what think
 you?"

Sighing and smiling as he takes his glass,
 Which they that woo preferment rarely pass,
 "Fallible man," the church-bred youth replies,
 "Is still found fallible, however wise ;
 And differing judgment serve but to declare,
 That truth lies somewhere, if we knew but where.
 Of all it ever was my lot to read,
 Of critics now alive, or long since dead,
 The book of all the world that charmed me most
 Was—well-a-day, the title-page was lost ;
 The writer well remarks, a heart that knows
 To take with gratitude what Heaven bestows,
 With prudence always ready at our call,
 To guide our use of it, is all in all.
 Doubtless it is.—To which, of my own store,
 I superadd a few essentials more ;
 But these, excuse the liberty I take,
 I waive just now, for conversation sake."—
 "Spoke like an oracle !" they all exclaim,
 And add Right Reverend to Smug's honoured name.

Hope.

TALKERS OF VARIOUS CLASSES.

DUBIUS is such a scrupulous good man,—
 Yes, you may catch him tripping if you can.
 He would not with a peremptory tone
 Assert the nose upon his face his own ;
 With hesitation admirably slow,
 He humbly hopes—presumes—it may be so.
 His evidence, if he were called by law
 To swear to some enormity he saw,

For want of prominence and just relief,
 Would hang an honest man, and save a thief.
 Through constant dread of giving truth offence,
 He ties up all his hearers in suspense ;
 Knows what he knows, as if he knew it not ;
 What he remembers seems to have forgot ;
 His sole opinion, whatsoe'er befall,
 Centering at last in having none at all.
 Yet though he tease and baulk your listening
 ear,
 He makes one useful point exceeding clear ;
 Howe'er ingenious on his darling theme
 A sceptic in philosophy may seem,
 Reduced to practice, his beloved rule
 Would only prove him a consummate fool ;
 Useless in him alike both brain and speech,
 Fate having placed all truth above his reach ;
 His ambiguities his total sum,
 He might as well be blind and deaf and dumb.

The emphatic speaker dearly loves to oppose
 In contact inconvenient, nose to nose ;
 As if the gnomon on his neighbour's phiz,
 Touched with the magnet, had attracted his.
 His whispered theme, dilated and at large,
 Proves after all a wind-gun's airy charge,
 An extract of his diary—no more,
 A tasteless journal of the day before.
 He walked abroad, o'ertaken in the rain
 Called on a friend, drank tea, stepped home
 again ;
 Resumed his purpose, had a world of talk
 With one he stumbled on, and lost his walk.
 I interrupt him with a sudden bow,
 ' Adieu, dear Sir ! lest you should lose it now.'

I cannot talk with civet in the room,
 A fine puss-gentleman that's all perfume ;
 The sight's enough—no need to smell a beau—
 Who thrusts his nose into a raree show ?
 His odoriferous attempts to please
 Perhaps might prosper with a swarm of bees ;
 But we that make no honey, though we sting,
 Poets, are sometimes apt to maul the thing.
 'Tis wrong to bring into a mixed resort
 What makes some sick, and others *à-la-mort*,
 An argument of cogence, we may say,
 Why such a one should keep himself away.

A graver coxcomb we may sometimes see,
 Quite as absurd, though not so light as he :
 A shallow brain behind a serious mask,
 An oracle within an empty cask,
 The solemn fop ; significant and budge ;
 A fool with judges, amongst fools a judge ;
 He says but little, and that little said
 Owes all its weight, like loaded dice, to lead.
 His wit invites you by his looks to come,
 But when you knock it never is at home :
 'Tis like a parcel sent you by the stage,
 Some handsome present, as your hopes presage ;
 'Tis heavy, bulky, and bids fair to prove
 An absent friend's fidelity and love ;
 But when unpacked, your disappointment groans
 To find it stuffed with brickbats, earth, and
 stones.

Some men employ their health, an ugly trick,
 In making known how oft they have been sick,
 And give us in recitals of disease
 A doctor's trouble, but without the fees ;
 Relate how many weeks they kept their bed,
 How an emetic or cathartic sped ;

Nothing is slightly touched, much less forgot,
 Nose, ears, and eyes seem present on the spot.
 Now the distemper, spite of draught or pill,
 Victorious seemed, and now the doctor's skill ;
 And now—alas for unforeseen mishaps !
 They put on a damp nightcap and relapse ;
 They thought they must have died, they were so
 bad ;

Their peevish hearers almost wish they had.

Some fretful tempers wince at every touch,
 You always do too little or too much :
 You speak with life, in hopes to entertain,—
 Your elevated voice goes through the brain ;
 You fall at once into a lower key,—
 That's worse, the drone-pipe of an humble-bee.
 The southern sash admits too strong a light,
 You rise and drop the curtain—now 'tis night ;
 He shakes with cold—you stir the fire and strive
 To make a blaze—that's roasting him alive.
 Serve him with venison, and he chooses fish ;
 With sole—that's just the sort he would not wish.
 He takes what he at first profess'd to loathe,
 And in due time feeds heartily on both ;
 Yet still o'erclouded with a constant frown,
 He does not swallow, but he gulps it down.
 Your hope to please him vain on every plan,
 Himself should work that wonder, if he can—
 Alas ! his efforts double his distress,
 He likes yours little, and his own still less,
 Thus always teasing others, always teased,
 His only pleasure is—to be displeased.

I pity bashful men, who feel the pain
 Of fancied scorn and undeserved disdain,
 And bear the marks upon a blushing face
 Of needless shame, and self-imposed disgrace.

Our sensibilities are so acute,
 The fear of being silent makes us mute.
 We sometimes think we could a speech produce
 Much to the purpose if our tongues were loose,
 But, being tried, it dies upon the lip,
 Faint as a chicken's note that has the pip :
 Our wasted oil unprofitably burns,
 Like hidden lamps in old sepulchral urns.
 Few Frenchmen of this evil have complain'd ;
 It seems as if we Britons were ordain'd,
 By way of wholesome curb upon our pride,
 To fear each other, fearing none beside.
 The cause perhaps inquiry may descry,
 Self-searching with an introverted eye,
 Conceal'd within an unsuspected part,
 The vainest corner of our own vain heart :
 For ever aiming at the world's esteem,
 Our self-importance ruins its own scheme ;
 In other eyes our talents rarely shown,
 Become at length so splendid in our own,
 We dare not risk them into public view,
 Lest they miscarry of what seems their due.
 True modesty is a discerning grace,
 And only blushes in the proper place ;
 But counterfeit is blind, and skulks through
 fear,
 Where 'tis a shame to be ashamed to appear :
 Humility the parent of the first,
 The last by Vanity produced and nursed.
 The circle form'd, we sit in silent state,
 Like figures drawn upon a dial-plate ;
 Yes ma'am and No ma'am, softly uttered, show
 Every five minutes how the minutes go ;
 Each individual suffering a constraint,
 Poetry may, but colours cannot paint.

As if in close committee on the sky,
 Reports it hot or cold, or wet or dry ;
 And finds a changing clime a happy source
 Of wise reflection, and well-timed discourse.
 We next inquire, but softly and by stealth,
 Like conservators of the public health,
 Of epidemic throats, if such there are,
 And coughs, and rheums, and phthisic, and catarrh.
 That theme exhausted, a wide chasm ensues,
 Filled up at last with interesting news,
 Who danced with whom, and who are like to wed,
 And who is hanged, and who is brought to bed ;
 But fear to call a more important cause,
 As if 'twere treason against English laws.
 The visit paid, with ecstasy we come,
 As from a seven years' transportation, home,
 And there resume an unembarrassed brow,
 Recovering what we lost we know not how,
 The faculties that seemed reduced to nought,
 Expression and the privilege of thought.

The reeking, roaring hero of the chase,
 I give him over as a desperate case.
 Physicians write in hopes to work a cure,
 Never, if honest ones, when death is sure ;
 And though the fox he follows may be tamed,
 A mere fox-follower never is reclaimed.
 Some farrier should prescribe his proper course,
 Whose only fit companion is his horse,
 Or if, deserving of a better doom,
 The noble beast judge otherwise, his groom.
 Yet even the rogue that serves him, though he
 stand,
 To take his honour's orders, cap in hand,
 Prefers his fellow-grooms, with much good sense ;
 Their skill a truth, his master's a pretence.

If neither horse nor groom affect the squire,
 Where can at last his jockeyship retire ?
 Oh to the club, the scene of savage joys,
 The school of coarse good fellowship and noise ;
 There, in the sweet society of those
 Whose friendship from his boyish years he chose,
 Let him improve his talent if he can,
 Till none but beasts acknowledge him a man.
Conversation.

THE SCHOOLBOY.

OH 'tis a sight to be with joy perused,
 By all whom sentiment has not abused ;

 A father blest with an ingenuous son,
 Father, and friend, and tutor, all in one.
 How !—turn again to tales long since forgot,
 Æsop, and Phædrus, and the rest ?—Why not ?
 He will not blush, that has a father's heart,
 To take in childish plays a childish part :
 But bends his sturdy back to any toy
 That youth takes pleasure in, to please his boy ;
 Then why resign into a stranger's hand
 A task as much within your own command,
 That God and Nature, and your interest too,
 Seem with one voice to delegate to you ?
 Why hire a lodging in a house unknown
 For one whose tenderest thoughts all hover round
 your own ?

This second weaning, needless as it is,
 How does it lacerate both your heart and his !
 The indented stick, that loses day by day
 Notch after notch, till all are smoothed away,
 Bears witness, long ere his dismissal come,
 With what intense desire he wants his home.
 But though the joys he hopes beneath your roof
 Bid fair enough to answer in the proof,
 Harmless and safe, and natural, as they are,
 A disappointment waits him even there :
 Arrived, he feels an unexpected change,
 He blushes, hangs his head, is shy and strange :
 No longer takes, as once with fearless ease,
 His favourite stand between his father's knees,
 But seeks the corner of some distant seat,
 And eyes the door, and watches a retreat ;
 And least familiar where he should be most,
 Feels all his happiest privileges lost.
 Alas, poor boy !—the natural effect
 Of love by absence chilled into respect.
 Say, what accomplishments at school acquired,
 Brings he, to sweeten fruits so undesired ?
 Thou well deservest an alienated son,
 Unless thy conscious heart acknowledge—none ;
 None that, in thy domestic snug recess,
 He had not made his own with more address,
 Though some perhaps that shock thy feeling mind,
 And better never learned, or left behind.
 Add too, that thus estranged, thou canst obtain
 By no kind arts his confidence again ;
 That here begins with most that long complaint
 Of filial frankness lost, and love grown faint,
 Which, oft neglected, in life's waning years
 A parent pours into regardless ears.

Tirocinium.

THE WISE TUTOR.

ART thou a man professionally tied,
 With all thy faculties elsewhere applied,
 Too busy to intend a meaner care
 Than how to enrich thyself, and next, thine heir ;
 Or art thou (as, though rich, perhaps thou art)
 But poor in knowledge, having none to impart :
 Behold that figure, neat, though plainly clad ;
 His sprightly mingled with a shade of sad ;
 Not of a nimble tongue, though now and then
 Heard to articulate like other men ;
 No jester, and yet lively in discourse ;
 His phrase well-chosen, clear, and full of force ;
 And his address, if not quite French in ease,
 Not English stiff, but frank, and formed to please ;
 Low in the world, because he scorns its arts ;
 A man of letters, manners, morals, parts ;
 Unpatronised, and therefore little known ;
 Wise for himself and his few friends alone—
 In him thy well-appointed proxy see,
 Armed for a work too difficult for thee ;
 Prepared by taste, by learning, and true worth,
 To form thy son, to strike his genius forth ;
 Beneath thy roof, beneath thine eye, to prove
 The force of discipline when backed by love ;
 To double all thy pleasure in thy child,
 His mind informed, his morals undefiled.

Tirocinium.

THE INJUDICIOUS PARENT.

BE it a weakness, it deserves some praise,
 We love the play-place of our early days.
 The scene is touching, and the heart is stone
 That feels not at that sight, and feels at none.
 The wall on which we tried our graving skill,
 The very name we carved subsisting still ;
 The bench on which we sat while deep employed,
 Though mangled, hacked, and hewed, not yet
 destroyed :

The little ones, unbuttoned, glowing hot,
 Playing our games, and on the very spot ;
 As happy as we once, to kneel and draw
 The chalky ring, and knuckle down at taw ;
 To pitch the ball into the grounded hat,
 Or drive it devious with a dexterous pat ;
 The pleasing spectacle at once excites
 Such recollection of our own delights,
 That, viewing it, we seem almost to obtain
 Our innocent sweet simple years again.
 This fond attachment to the well-known place
 Whence first we started into life's long race,
 Maintains its hold with such unfailing sway,
 We feel it e'en in age, and at our latest day.
 Hark ! how the sire of chits, whose future share
 Of classic food begins to be his care,
 With his own likeness placed on either knee,
 Indulges all a father's heartfelt glee ;
 And tells them, as he strokes their silver locks,
 That they must soon learn Latin, and to box :

Then turning, he regales his listening wife
 With all the adventures of his early life ;
 His skill in coachmanship, or driving chaise,
 In bilking taverns bills and spouting plays ;
 What shifts he used, detected in a scrape,
 How he was flogged, or had the luck to escape ;
 What sums he lost at play, and how he sold
 Watch, seals, and all—till all his pranks are told.
 Retracing thus his *frolics* ('tis a name
 That palliates deeds of folly and of shame),
 He gives the local bias all its sway ;
 Resolves that where he played his sons shall play,
 And destines their bright genius to be shown
 Just in the scene where he displayed his own.
 The meek and bashful boy will soon be taught
 To be as bold and forward as he ought ;
 The rude will scuffle through with ease enough,
 Great schools suit best the sturdy and the rough.
 Ah, happy designation, prudent choice,
 The event is sure ; expect it, and rejoice !
 Soon see your wish fulfilled in either child,
 The pert made perter, and the tame made wild.

Tirocinium.

RECOLLECTIONS OF CHILDHOOD.

THERE is in souls a sympathy with sounds,
 And as the mind is pitch'd the ear is pleas'd
 With melting airs or martial, brisk or grave.
 Some chord in unison with what we hear
 Is touch'd within us, and the heart replies.

How soft the music of those village bells
 Falling at intervals upon the ear
 In cadence sweet ! now dying all away,
 Now pealing loud again and louder still,
 Clear and sonorous as the gale comes on.
 With easy force it opens all the cells
 Where memory slept. Wherever I have heard
 A kindred melody, the scene recurs,
 And with it all its pleasures and its pains.
 Such comprehensive views the spirit takes,
 That in a few short moments I retrace
 (As in a map the voyager his course)
 The windings of my way through many years.
 Short as in retrospect the journey seems,
 It seemed not always short ; the rugged path,
 And prospect oft so dreary and forlorn,
 Moved many a sigh at its disheartening length.
 Yet feeling present evils, while the past
 Faintly impress the mind, or not at all,
 How readily we wish time spent revoked,
 That we might try the ground again, where once
 (Through inexperience as we now perceive)
 We missed that happiness we might have found !
 Some friend is gone, perhaps his son's best friend,
 A father, whose authority, in show
 When most severe, and mustering all its force,
 Was but the graver countenance of love ;
 Whose favour, like the clouds of spring, might lower,
 And utter now and then an awful voice,
 But had a blessing in its darkest frown,
 Threatening at once and nourishing the plant.
 We loved, but not enough, the gentle hand
 That reared us. At a thoughtless age allured
 By every gilded folly, we renounced
 His sheltering side, and wilfully forewent

That converse which we now in vain regret.
How gladly would the man recall to life
The boy's neglected sire ! a mother too,
That softer friend, perhaps more gladly still,
Might he demand them at the gates of death.
Sorrow has, since they went, subdued and tamed
The playful humour ; he could now endure
(Himself grown sober in the vale of tears)
And feel a parent's presence no restraint.
But not to understand a treasure's worth
Till time has stolen away the slighted good,
Is cause of half the poverty we feel,
And makes the world the wilderness it is.
The few that pray at all pray oft amiss,
And, seeking grace to improve the prize they hold,
Would urge a wiser suit than asking more.

The Task, Book VI.

POEMS ON RELIGIOUS
SUBJECTS.

CONVERSION.

IF ever thou hast felt another's pain,
If ever when he sigh'd, hast sigh'd again,
If ever on thy eyelid stood a tear
That pity had engender'd, drop one here.
This man was happy, had the world's good word,
And with it every joy it can afford ;
Friendship and love seem'd tenderly at strife,
Which most should sweeten his untroubled life ;
Politely learn'd, and of a gentle race,
Good breeding and good sense gave all a grace,
And whether at the toilet of the fair
He laughed and trifled, made him welcome there ;
Or if in masculine debate he shared,
Ensured him mute attention and regard.
Alas, how changed ! Expressive of his mind,
His eyes are sunk, arms folded, head reclined ;
Those awful syllables—hell, death, and sin,
Though whispered, plainly tell what works within,
That conscience there performs her proper part,
And writes a doomsday sentence on his heart,
Forsaking, and forsaken of all friends,
He now perceives where earthly pleasure ends ;
Hard task for one who lately knew no care,
And harder still as learnt beneath despair :

His hours no longer pass unmark'd away,
 A dark importance saddens every day ;
 He hears the notice of the clock perplex'd,
 And cries, " Perhaps eternity strikes next !"
 Sweet music is no longer music here,
 And laughter sounds like madness in his ear ;
 His grief the world of all her power disarms,
 Wine has no taste, and beauty has no charms :
 God's holy word, once trivial in his view,
 Now by the voice of his experience true,
 Seems, as it is, the fountain whence alone
 Must spring that hope he pants to make his own.

Now let the bright reverse be known abroad ;
 Say man's a worm, and power belongs to God.
 As when a felon whom his country's laws
 Have justly doom'd for some atrocious cause,
 Expects in darkness and heart-chilling fears,
 The shameful close of all his mis-spent years,
 If chance, on heavy pinions slowly borne,
 A tempest usher in the dreaded morn,
 Upon his dungeon walls the lightnings play,
 The thunder seems to summon him away,
 The warder at the door his key applies,
 Shoots back the bolt, and all his courage dies :
 If then, just then, all thoughts of mercy lost,
 When hope, long lingering, at last yields the
 ghost,

The sound of pardon pierce his startled ear,
 He drops at once his fetters and his fear,
 A transport glows in all he looks and speaks,
 And the first thankful tears bedew his cheeks.
 Joy, far superior joy, that much outweighs
 The comfort of a few poor added days,
 Invades, possesses, and o'erwhelms the soul
 Of him whom Hope has with a touch made whole ;

'Tis heaven, all heaven descending on the wings
 Of the glad legions of the King of kings ;
 'Tis more—'tis God diffused through every part,
 'Tis God himself triumphant in his heart.
 O, welcome now the sun's once hated light,
 His noonday beams were never half so bright.
 Not kindred minds alone are called to employ
 Their hours, their days, in listening to his joy ;
 Unconscious nature, all that he surveys,
 Rocks, groves, and streams, must join him in his praise.
Hope.

GOD IN NATURE.

THE Lord of all, Himself through all diffused,
 Sustains and is the life of all that lives.
 Nature is but a name for an effect
 Whose cause is God. He feeds the secret fire
 By which the mighty process is maintain'd,
 Who sleeps not, is not weary ; in whose sight
 Slow-circling ages are as transient days ;
 Whose work is without labour ; whose designs
 No flaw deforms, no difficulty thwarts ;
 And whose beneficence no charge exhausts.
 Him blind antiquity profaned, not served,
 With self-taught rites, and under various names,
 Female and male, Pomona, Pales, Pan,
 And Flora and Vertumnus ; peopling earth
 With tutelary goddesses and gods
 That were not, and commending as they would
 To each some province, garden, field, or grove.

But all are under One. One Spirit—His
 Who wore the plaited thorns with bleeding brows
 Rules universal nature. Not a flower
 But shows some touch in freckle, streak, or stain,
 Of His unrivall'd pencil. He inspires
 Their balmy odours and imparts their hues,
 And bathes their eyes with nectar, and includes,
 In grains as countless as the seaside sands,
 The forms with which He sprinkles all the earth.
 Happy who walks with him ! whom what he finds
 Of flavour or of scent in fruit or flower,
 Or what he views of beautiful or grand
 In nature, from the broad, majestic oak
 To the green blade that twinkles in the sun,
 Prompts with remembrance of a present God.
 His presence, who made all so fair, perceived,
 Makes all still fairer. As with Him no scene
 Is dreary, so with Him all seasons please.
 Though winter had been none, had man been true,
 And earth be punish'd for its tenant's sake,
 Yet not in vengeance ; as this smiling sky,
 So soon succeeding such an angry night,
 And these dissolving snows, and this clear stream
 Recovering fast its liquid music, prove.

The Task, Book VI.

DIVINE REVIVAL IN NATURE.

ALL we behold is miracle, but seen
 So duly, all is miracle in vain.
 Where now the vital energy that moved,
 While summer was, the pure and subtle lymph
 Through the imperceptible meandering veins
 Of leaf and flower? It sleeps ; and the icy touch
 Of unprolific winter has impress'd
 A cold stagnation on the intestine tide.
 But let the months go round, a few short months,
 And all shall be restored. These naked shoots,
 Barren as lances, among which the wind
 Makes wintry music, sighing as it goes,
 Shall put their graceful foliage on again,
 And more aspiring, and with ampler spread,
 Shall boast new charms, and more than they have
 lost.

Then, each in its peculiar honours clad,
 Shall publish, even to the distant eye,
 Its family and tribe. Laburnum rich
 In streaming gold ; syringa ivory pure ;
 The scentless and the scented rose, this red
 And of an humbler growth, the other tall,
 And throwing up into the darkest gloom
 Of neighbouring cypress, or more sable yew,
 Her silver globes, light as the foamy surf
 That the wind severs from the broken wave ;
 The lilac various in array, now white,
 Now sanguine, and her beauteous head now set
 With purple spikes pyramidal, as if

Studious of ornament, yet unresolved
Which hue she most approved, she chose them all.

These have been, and these shall be in their day ;
And all this uniform uncoloured scene
Shall be dismantled of its fleecy load,
And flush into variety again.

From dearth to plenty, and from death to life,
Is Nature's progress when she lectures man
In heavenly truth ; evincing, as she makes
The grand transition, that there lives and works
A soul in all things, and that soul is God.

The beauties of the wilderness are His,
That make so gay the solitary place
Where no eye sees them. And the fairer forms,
That cultivation glories in, are His.

He sets the bright procession on its way,
And marshals all the order of the year ;
He marks the bounds which winter may not pass,
And blunts His pointed fury ; in its case,
Russet and rude, folds up the tender germ
Uninjured, with inimitable art ;
And, ere one flowery season fades and dies,
Designs the blooming wonders of the next.

The Task, Book VI.

THE JOURNEY TO EMMAUS.

It happened on a solemn eventide,
Soon after He that was our surety died,
Two bosom friends, each pensively inclined,
The scene of all those sorrows left behind,

Sought their own village, busied as they went
 In musings worthy of the great event :
 They spake of him they loved, of him whose life,
 Though blameless, had incurred perpetual strife,
 Whose deeds had left, in spite of hostile arts,
 A deep memorial graven on their hearts.
 The recollection, like a vein of ore,
 The farther traced, enriched them still the more ;
 They thought him, and they justly thought him, one
 Sent to do more than he appeared to have done,
 To exalt a people, and to place them high
 Above all else, and wondered he should die.
 Ere yet they brought their journey to an end,
 A stranger joined them, courteous as a friend,
 And asked them with a kind engaging air
 What their affliction was, and begged a share.
 Informed, he gathered up the broken thread,
 And, truth and wisdom gracing all he said,
 Explained, illustrated, and searched so well
 The tender theme, on which they chose to dwell,
 That reaching home, "The night," they said, "is near,
 We must not now be parted, sojourn here."
 The new acquaintance soon became a guest,
 And, made so welcome at their simple feast,
 He blessed the bread, but vanished at the word,
 And left them both exclaiming, "'Twas the Lord !
 Did not our hearts feel all he deigned to say,
 Did they not burn within us by the way?"

Conversation.

RELIGION IN RURAL LIFE.

HACKNEY'D in business, wearied at that oar,
 Which thousands, once fast chain'd to, quit no more,
 But which, when life at ebb runs weak and low,
 All wish, or seem to wish, they could forego ;
 The statesman, lawyer, merchant, man of trade,
 Pants for the refuge of some rural shade,
 Where all his long anxieties forgot,
 Amid the charms of a sequester'd spot,
 Or recollected only to gild o'er
 And add a smile to what was sweet before,
 He may possess the joys he thinks he sees,
 Lay his old age upon the lap of ease,
 Improve the remnant of his wasted span,
 And, having lived a trifler, die a man.
 Thus conscience pleads her cause within the breast,
 Though long rebell'd against, not yet suppress'd,
 And calls a creature form'd for God alone,
 For Heaven's high purposes and not his own,
 Calls him away from selfish ends and aims,
 From what debilitates and what inflames,
 From cities humming with a restless crowd,
 Sordid as active, ignorant as loud,
 Whose highest praise is that they live in vain,
 The dupes of pleasure, or the slaves of gain,
 Where works of man are cluster'd close around
 And works of God are hardly to be found,
 To regions where, in spite of sin and woe,
 Traces of Eden are still seen below,
 Where mountain, river, forest, field, and grove
 Remind him of his Maker's power and love.

'Tis well if look'd for at so late a day,
 In the last scene of such a senseless play,
 True wisdom will attend his feeble call,
 And grace his action ere the curtain fall.
 Souls that have long despised their heavenly
 birth,

Their wishes all impregnated with earth,
 For threescore years employ'd with ceaseless care,
 In catching smoke and feeding upon air ;
 Conversant only with the ways of men,
 Rarely redeem the short remaining ten.
 Inveterate habits choke the unfruitful heart,
 Their fibres penetrate its tenderest part,
 And draining its nutritious powers to feed
 Their noxious growth, starve every better seed.

Happy if full of days—but happier far,
 If ere we yet discern life's evening star,
 Sick of the service of a world that feeds
 Its patient drudges with dry chaff and weeds,
 We can escape from custom's idiot sway,
 To serve the Sovereign we were born to obey.
 Then sweet to muse upon His skill display'd
 (Infinite skill) in all that He has made !
 To trace in Nature's most minute design
 The signature and stamp of power divine,
 Contrivance intricate express'd with ease,
 Where unassisted sight no beauty sees,
 The shapely limb and lubricated joint,
 Within the small dimensions of a point ;
 Muscle and nerve miraculously spun,
 His mighty work who speaks and it is done,
 The Invisible in things scarce seen reveal'd,
 To whom an atom is an ample field ;
 To wonder at a thousand insect forms,
 These hatch'd, and those resuscitated worms,

New life ordain'd and brighter scenes to share,
 Once prone on earth, now buoyant upon air,
 Whose shape would make them, had they bulk and
 size,

More hideous foes than fancy can devise ;
 With helmet heads, and dragon scales adorned,
 The mighty myriads, now securely scorned,
 Would mock the majesty of man's high birth,
 Despise his bulwarks, and unpeople earth :
 Then with a glance of fancy to survey,
 Far as the faculty can stretch away,
 Ten thousand rivers poured at his command
 From urns, that never fail, through every land ;
 These like a deluge with impetuous force,
 Those winding modestly a silent course ;
 The cloud-surmounting Alps, the fruitful vales ;
 Seas, on which every nation spreads her sails ;
 The sun, a world whence other worlds drink light,
 The crescent moon, the diadem of night ;
 Stars countless, each in his appointed place,
 Fast anchored in the deep abyss of space—
 At such a sight to catch the poet's flame,
 And with a rapture like his own exclaim,

“ These are Thy glorious works, Thou Source of good,
 How dimly seen, how faintly understood !
 Thine, and upheld by Thy paternal care,
 This universal frame, thus wondrous fair ;
 Thy power divine, and bounty beyond thought,
 Adored and praised in all that Thou hast wrought.
 Absorbed in that immensity I see,
 I shrink abased, and yet aspire to Thee ;
 Instruct me, guide me to that heavenly day
 Thy words, more clearly than Thy works, display,
 That, while Thy truths my grosser thoughts refine,
 I may resemble Thee, and call Thee mine.”

Retirement.

THE RESTORATION OF ALL THINGS.

SWEET is the harp of prophecy ; too sweet
 Not to be wrong'd by a mere mortal touch ;
 Nor can the wonders it records be sung
 To meaner music, and not suffer loss.
 But when a poet, or when one like me,
 Happy to rove among poetic flowers,
 Though poor in skill to rear them, lights at last
 On some fair theme, some theme divinely fair,
 Such is the impulse and the spur he feels
 To give it praise proportion'd to its worth,
 That not to attempt it, arduous as he deems
 The labour, were a task more arduous still.

Oh scenes surpassing fable, and yet true,
 Scenes of accomplish'd bliss ! which who can see
 Though but in distant prospect, and not feel
 His soul refresh'd with foretaste of the joy ?
 Rivers of gladness water all the earth,
 And clothe all climes with beauty ; the reproach
 Of barrenness is past. The fruitful field
 Laughs with abundance : and the land once lean,
 Or fertile only in its own disgrace,
 Exults to see its thistly curse repeal'd.
 The various seasons woven into one,
 And that one season an eternal spring,
 The garden feels no blight, and needs no fence,
 For there is none to covet, all are full.
 The lion, and the libbard, and the bear
 Graze with the fearless flocks ; all bask at noon
 Together, or all gambol in the shade
 Of the same grove, and drink one common stream.

Antipathies are none. No foe to man
 Lurks in the serpent now : the mother sees,
 And smiles to see, her infant's playful hand
 Stretch'd forth to dally with the crested worm,
 To stroke his azure neck, or to receive
 The lambent homage of his arrowy tongue.
 All creatures worship man, and all mankind
 One Lord, one Father. Error has no place :
 That creeping pestilence is driven away :
 The breath of Heaven has chased it. In the heart
 No passion touches a discordant string,
 But all is harmony and love. Disease
 Is not ; the pure and uncontaminate blood
 Holds its due course, nor fears the frost of age.
 One song employs all nations, and all cry,
 " Worthy the Lamb, for He was slain for us !"
 The dwellers in the vales and on the rocks
 Shout to each other, and the mountain-tops
 From distant mountains catch the flying joy,
 Till, nation after nation, taught the strain,
 Earth rolls the rapturous hosanna round.
 Behold the measure of the promise fill'd ;
 See Salem built, the labour of a God !
 Bright as a sun the sacred city shines ;
 All kingdoms and all princes of the earth
 Flock to that light ; the glory of all lands
 Flows into her ; unbounded is her joy,
 And endless her increase. Thy rams are there,
 Nebaioth, and the flocks of Kedar there ;
 The looms of Ormus, and the mines of Ind,
 And Saba's spicy groves, pay tribute there.
 Praise is in all her gates : upon her walls,
 And in her streets, and in her spacious courts,
 Is heard salvation. Eastern Java there
 Kneels with the native of the farthest west,

And Æthiopia spreads abroad the hand
 And worships. Her report has travell'd forth
 Into all lands. From every clime they come
 To see thy beauty, and to share thy joy,
 O Sion ! an assembly such as earth
 Saw never, such as heaven stoops down to see.

Thus heavenward all things tend. For all were once
 Perfect, and all must be at length restored.
 So God has greatly purposed ; who would else
 In His dishonour'd works Himself endure
 Dishonour, and be wrong'd without redress.
 Haste then, and wheel away a shatter'd world,
 Ye slow-revolving seasons ! we would see
 (A sight to which our eyes are strangers yet)
 A world that does not dread and hate His laws,
 And suffer for its crime ; would learn how fair
 The creature is that God pronounces good,
 How pleasant in itself what pleases Him.
 Here every drop of honey hides a sting,
 Worms wind themselves into our sweetest flowers,
 And even the joy that haply some poor heart
 Derives from Heaven, pure as the fountain is,
 Is sullied in the stream ; taking a taint
 From touch of human lips, at best impure.
 Oh for a world in principle as chaste
 As this is gross and selfish ! over which
 Custom and prejudice shall bear no sway,
 That govern all things here, shouldering aside
 The meek and modest Truth, and forcing her
 To seek a refuge from the tongue of strife
 In nooks obscure, far from the ways of men ;
 Where violence shall never lift the sword,
 Nor cunning justify the proud man's wrong,
 Leaving the poor no remedy but tears ;
 Where he that fills an office, shall esteem

The occasion it presents of doing good
 More than the perquisite ; where law shall speak
 Seldom, and never but as wisdom prompts
 And equity ; not jealous more to guard
 A worthless form than to decide aright ;
 Where fashion shall not sanctify abuse,
 Nor smooth good-breeding (supplemental grace)
 With lean performance ape the work of love.

Come then, and added to Thy many crowns,
 Receive yet one, the crown of all the earth,
 Thou who alone art worthy ! It was Thine
 By ancient covenant ere nature's birth,
 And Thou hast made it Thine by purchase since,
 And overpaid its value with Thy blood.
 Thy saints proclaim Thee King ; and in their hearts
 Thy title is engraven with a pen
 Dipped in the fountain of eternal love.
 Thy saints proclaim Thee King ; and Thy delay
 Gives courage to their foes, who, could they see
 The dawn of Thy last advent, long-desired,
 Would creep into the bowels of the hills,
 And flee for safety to the falling rocks.
 The very spirit of the world is tired
 Of its own taunting question, asked so long,
 " Where is the promise of your Lord's approach ?"
The Task, Book VI.

WALKING WITH GOD.

Gen. v. 24.

Oh for a closer walk with God,
A calm and heavenly frame ;
A light to shine upon the road
That leads me to the Lamb !

Where is the blessedness I knew
When first I saw the Lord ?
Where is the soul-refreshing view
Of Jesus and His word ?

What peaceful hours I once enjoyed !
How sweet their memory still !
But they have left an aching void,
The world can never fill.

Return, O holy Dove, return !
Sweet messenger of rest !
I hate the sins that made Thee mourn,
And drove Thee from my breast.

The dearest idol I have known,
Whate'er that idol be,
Help me to tear it from Thy throne,
And worship only Thee.

So shall my walk be close with God,
Calm and serene my frame ;
So purer light shall mark the road
That leads me to the Lamb.

JEHOVAH-NISSI,

THE LORD MY BANNER. *Exod.* xvii. 15.

BY whom was David taught
 To aim the deadly blow,
 When he Goliath fought,
 And laid the Gittite low?
 Nor sword nor spear the stripling took,
 But chose a pebble from the brook.

'Twas Israel's God and King
 Who sent him to the fight;
 Who gave him strength to sling,
 And skill to aim aright.
 Ye feeble saints, your strength endures,
 Because young David's God is yours.

Who ordered Gideon forth
 To storm the invaders' camp,
 With arms of little worth,
 A pitcher and a lamp?
 The trumpets made his coming known,
 And all the host was overthrown.

Oh! I have seen the day,
 When with a single word,
 God helping me to say,
 "My trust is in the Lord,"
 My soul hath quelled a thousand foes,
 Fearless of all that could oppose.

But unbelief, self-will,
 Self-righteousness, and pride,
 How often do they steal
 My weapon from my side!
 Yet David's Lord, and Gideon's friend,
 Will help His servant to the end.

THE CONTRITE HEART.

THE Lord will happiness divine
 On contrite hearts bestow ;
 Then tell me, gracious God, is mine
 A contrite heart, or no ?

I hear, but seem to hear in vain,
 Insensible as steel ;
 If aught is felt, 'tis only pain,
 To find I cannot feel.

I sometimes think myself inclined
 To love thee, if I could ;
 But often feel another mind,
 Averse to all that's good.

My best desires are faint and few,
 I fain would strive for more ;
 But when I cry, " My strength renew !"
 Seem weaker than before.

Thy saints are comforted, I know,
 And love Thy house of prayer ;
 I therefore go where others go,
 But find no comfort there.

Oh ! make this heart rejoice or ache ;
 Decide this doubt for me ;
 And if it be not broken, break—
 And heal it, if it be.

LOVEST THOU ME?

HARK, my soul ! it is the Lord ;
 'Tis thy Saviour, hear His word ;
 Jesus speaks, and speaks to thee,
 " Say, poor sinner, lovest thou me ?

" I delivered thee when bound,
 And when bleeding, healed thy wound ;
 Sought thee wandering, set thee right ;
 Turned thy darkness into light.

" Can a woman's tender care
 Cease towards the child she bare ?
 Yes, she may forgetful be,
 Yet will I remember thee.

" Mine is an unchanging love,
 Higher than the heights above,
 Deeper than the depths beneath,
 Free and faithful, strong as death.

" Thou shalt see my glory soon,
 When the work of grace is done ;
 Partner of my throne shalt be ;—
 Say, poor sinner, lovest thou me ?"

Lord, it is my chief complaint,
 That my love is weak and faint ;
 Yet I love Thee and adore,—
 Oh for grace to love Thee more !

RETIREMENT.

FAR from the world, O Lord, I flee,
 From strife and tumult far ;
 From scenes where Satan wages still
 His most successful war.

The calm retreat, the silent shade,
 With prayer and praise agree ;
 And seem by Thy sweet bounty made
 For those who follow Thee.

There, if Thy Spirit touch the soul,
 And grace her mean abode,
 Oh ! with what peace, and joy, and love,
 She communes with her God !

There like the nightingale she pours
 Her solitary lays ;
 Nor asks a witness of her song,
 Nor thirsts for human praise.

Author and guardian of my life,
 Sweet source of light divine,
 And—all harmonious names in one—
 My Saviour ! Thou art mine !

What thanks I owe Thee, and what love,
 A boundless, endless store,
 Shall echo through the realms above,
 When time shall be no more.

GRACE AND PROVIDENCE.

ALMIGHTY KING ! whose wondrous hand
 Supports the weight of sea and land ;
 Whose grace is such a boundless store,
 No heart shall break that sighs for more ;

Thy providence supplies my food,
 And 'tis Thy blessing makes it good ;
 My soul is nourished by Thy word :
 Let soul and body praise the Lord !

My streams of outward comfort came
 From Him who built this earthly frame ;
 Whate'er I want His bounty gives,
 By whom my soul for ever lives.

Either His hand preserves from pain,
 Or, if I feel it, heals again ;
 From Satan's malice shields my breast,
 Or overrules it for the best.

Forgive the song that falls so low
 Beneath the gratitude I owe !
 It means Thy praise, however poor,
 An angel's song can do no more.

THE WAITING SOUL.

BREATHE from the gentle south, O Lord,
 And cheer me from the north ;
 Blow on the treasures of Thy word,
 And call the spices forth !

I wish, Thou know'st, to be resigned,
 And wait with patient hope ;
 But hope delayed fatigues the mind,
 And drinks the spirit up.

Help me to reach the distant goal ;
 Confirm my feeble knee ;
 Pity the sickness of a soul
 That faints for love of Thee !

Cold as I feel this heart of mine,
 Yet, since I feel it so,
 It yields some hope of life divine
 Within, however low :

I seem forsaken and alone,
 I hear the lion roar ;
 And every door is shut but one,
 And that is Mercy's door.

There, till the dear Deliverer come,
 I'll wait with humble prayer ;
 And when He calls His exile home,
 The Lord shall find him there.

LIGHT SHINING OUT OF DARKNESS.¹

God moves in a mysterious way
 His wonders to perform ;
 He plants His footsteps in the sea,
 And rides upon the storm.

Deep in unfathomable mines
 Of never-failing skill,
 He treasures up His bright designs,
 And works His sovereign will.

Ye fearful saints, fresh courage take,
 The clouds ye so much dread
 Are big with mercy, and shall break
 In blessings on your head.

Judge not the Lord by feeble sense,
 But trust Him for His grace ;
 Behind a frowning providence
 He hides a smiling face.

His purposes will ripen fast,
 Unfolding every hour ;
 The bud may have a bitter taste,
 But sweet will be the flower.

Blind unbelief is sure to err,
 And scan His work in vain :
 God is His own interpreter,
 And He will make it plain.

¹ Composed June 1773, on the eve of Cowper's second attack of insanity.

HUMAN FRAILTY.

WEAK and irresolute is man ;
 The purpose of to-day,
 Woven with pains into his plan,
 To-morrow rends away.

The bow well bent and smart the spring,
 Vice seems already slain,
 But passion rudely snaps the string,
 And it revives again.

Some foe to his upright intent
 Finds out his weaker part,
 Virtue engages his assent,
 But pleasure wins his heart.

'Tis here the folly of the wise
 Through all his art we view,
 And while his tongue the charge denies,
 His conscience owns it true.

Bound on a voyage of awful length
 And dangers little known,
 A stranger to superior strength,
 Man vainly trusts his own.

But oars alone can ne'er prevail
 To reach the distant coast,
 The breath of heaven must swell the sail,
 Or all the toil is lost.

STANZAS

SURJOINED TO THE YEARLY BILL OF MORTALITY OF THE
PARISH OF ALL SAINTS, NORTHAMPTON ;

FOR THE YEAR 1787.

*Pallida Mors æquo pulsat pede pauperum tabernas
Regumque tures.*—HORACE.

Pale Death with equal foot strikes wide the door
Of royal halls and hovels of the poor.

WHILE thirteen moons saw smoothly run
The Nen's barge-laden wave,
All these, life's rambling journey done,
Have found their home, the grave.

Was man (frail always) made more frail
Than in foregoing years?
Did famine or did plague prevail,
That so much death appears?

No : these were vigorous as their sires,
Nor plague nor famine came ;
This annual tribute Death requires,
And never waives his claim.

Like crowded forest-trees we stand,
And some are marked to fall ;
The axe will smite at God's command,
And soon shall smite us all.

Green as the bay-tree, ever green,
With its new foliage on,
The gay, the thoughtless, have I seen ;
I passed—and they were gone.

Read, ye that run, the awful truth
 With which I charge my page ;
 A worm is in the bud of youth,
 And at the root of age.

No present health can health ensure
 For yet an hour to come ;
 No medicine, though it oft can cure,
 Can always balk the tomb.

And oh ! that humble as my lot,
 And scorned as is my strain,
 These truths, though known, too much forgot,
 I may not teach in vain.

So prays your Clerk with all his heart,
 And ere he quits the pen,
 Begs *you* for once to take *his* part,
 And answer all—“ Amen !”

ON A SIMILAR OCCASION,

FOR THE YEAR 1790.

Ne commonentem recta sperne.—BUCHANAN.
 Despise not my good counsel.

HE who sits from day to day
 Where the prisoned lark is hung,
 Heedless of his loudest lay,
 Hardly knows that he has sung.

Where the watchman in his round
 Nightly lifts his voice on high,

None, accustomed to the sound,
Wakes the sooner for his cry.

So your verse-man I, and clerk,
Yearly in my song proclaim
Death at hand—yourselves his mark—
And the foe's unerring aim.

Duly at my time I come,
Publishing to all aloud—
Soon the grave must be your home,
And your only suit a shroud.

But the monitory strain,
Oft repeated in your cars,
Seems to sound too much in vain,
Wins no notice, wakes no fears.

Can a truth, by all confessed
Of such magnitude and weight,
Grow, by being oft expressed,
Trivial as a parrot's prate?

Pleasure's call attention wins,
Hear it often as we may;
New as ever seem our sins,
Though committed every day.

Death and Judgment, Heaven and Hell—
These alone, so often heard,
No more move us than the bell
When some stranger is interred.

Oh then, ere the turf or tomb
Cover us from every eye,
Spirit of instruction! come
Make us learn that we must die.

ON A SIMILAR OCCASION,

FOR THE YEAR 1793.

De sacris autem hæc sit una sententia, ut conserventur.—CIC. de Leg.

But let us all concur in this one sentiment, that things sacred be
inviolated.

HE lives who lives to God, alone,
And all are dead beside ;
For other source than God is none
Whence life can be supplied.

To live to God is to requite
His love as best we may ;
To make His precepts our delight,
His promises our stay.

But life, within a narrow ring
Of giddy joys comprised,
Is falsely named, and no such thing,
But rather death disguised.

Can life in them deserve the name,
Who only live to prove
For what poor toys they can disclaim
An endless life above ?

Who, much diseased, yet nothing feel ;
Much menaced, nothing dread ;
Have wounds which only God can heal,
Yet never ask His aid ?

Who deem His house a useless place,
Faith, want of common sense,

And ardour in the Christian race
A hypocrite's pretence ?

Who trample order ; and the day
Which God asserts His own
Dishonour with unhallowed play,
And worship Chance alone ?

If scorn of God's commands, impressed
On word and deed, imply
The better part of man unblessed
With life that cannot die ;

Such want it : and that want, uncured
Till man resigns his breath,
Speaks him a criminal, assured
Of everlasting death.

Sad period to a pleasant course !
Yet so will God repay
Sabbaths profaned without remorse,
And Mercy cast away.

POEMS HUMOROUS AND
PLAYFUL.

THE DIVERTING HISTORY OF JOHN GILPIN :

SHOWING HOW HE WENT FARTHER THAN HE
INTENDED AND CAME SAFE HOME AGAIN.

JOHN GILPIN was a citizen
Of credit and renown,
A train-band captain eke was he
Of famous London town.

John Gilpin's spouse said to her dear,
"Though wedded we have been
These twice ten tedious years, yet we
No holiday have seen.

"To-morrow is our wedding-day,
And we will then repair
Unto the Bell at Edmonton,
All in a chaise and pair.

"My sister, and my sister's child,
Myself, and children three,
Will fill the chaise ; so you must ride
On horseback after we."

He soon replied, "I do admire
Of womankind but one,
And you are she, my dearest dear,
Therefore it shall be done.

“ I am a linen-draper bold,
 As all the world doth know,
 And my good friend the calender
 Will lend his horse to go.”

Quoth Mrs. Gilpin, “ That’s well said ;
 And for that wine is dear,
 We will be furnished with our own,
 Which is both bright and clear.”

John Gilpin kissed his loving wife ;
 O’erjoyed was he to find,
 That though on pleasure she was bent,
 She had a frugal mind.

The morning came, the chaise was brought,
 But yet was not allowed
 To drive up to the door, lest all
 Should say that she was proud.

So three doors off the chaise was stayed,
 Where they did all get in ;
 Six precious souls, and all agog
 To dash through thick and thin.

Smack went the whip, round went the wheels,
 Were never folk so glad,
 The stones did rattle underneath,
 As if Cheapside were mad.

John Gilpin at his horse’s side
 Seized fast the flowing mane,
 And up he got, in haste to ride,
 But soon came down again ;

For saddle-tree scarce reached had he,
 His journey to begin,
 When, turning round his head, he saw,
 Three customers come in.

So down he came ; for loss of time,
 Although it grieved him sore,
 Yet loss of pence, full well he knew,
 Would trouble him much more.

"Twas long before the customers
 Were suited to their mind,
 When Betty screaming came downstairs,
 "The wine is left behind !"

" Good luck !" quoth he—" yet bring it me,
 My leathern belt likewise,
 In which I bear my trusty sword,
 When I do exercise."

Now Mistress Gilpin (careful soul !)
 Had two stone bottles found,
 To hold the liquor that she loved,
 And keep it safe and sound.

Each bottle had a curling ear,
 Through which the belt he drew,
 And hung a bottle on each side,
 To make his balance true.

Then over all, that he might be
 Equipped from top to toe,
 His long red cloak, well brushed and neat,
 He manfully did throw.

Now see him mounted once again
 Upon his nimble steed,
 Full slowly pacing o'er the stones,
 With caution and good heed.

But finding soon a smoother road
 Beneath his well-shod feet,
 The snorting beast began to trot,
 Which galled him in his seat.

So, "Fair and softly," John he cried,
 But John he cried in vain ;
 That trot became a gallop soon,
 In spite of curb and rein.

So stooping down, as needs he must
 Who cannot sit upright,
 He grasped the mane with both his hands,
 And eke with all his might.

His horse, who never in that sort
 Had handled been before,
 What thing upon his back had got
 Did wonder more and more.

Away went Gilpin, neck or nought ;
 Away went hat and wig ;
 He little dreamt, when he set out,
 Of running such a rig.

The wind did blow, the cloak did fly,
 Like streamer long and gay,
 Till, loop and button failing both,
 At last it flew away.

Then might all people well discern
 The bottles he had slung ;
 A bottle swinging at each side,
 As hath been said or sung.

The dogs did bark, the children screamed,
 Up flew the windows all ;
 And every soul cried out, " Well done !"
 As loud as he could bawl.

Away went Gilpin—who but he ?
 His fame soon spread around ;
 " He carries weight !" " He rides a race !"
 " 'Tis for a thousand pound !"

And still, as fast as he drew near,
 'Twas wonderful to view,
 How in a trice the turnpike men
 Their gates wide open threw

And now, as he went bowing down
 His reeking head full low,
 The bottles twain behind his back
 Were shattered at a blow.

Down ran the wine into the road,
 Most piteous to be seen,
 Which made his horse's flanks to smoke
 As they had basted been.

But still he seemed to carry weight,
 With leathern girdle braced ;
 For all might see the bottle necks
 Still dangling at his waist.

Thus all through merry Islington,
 These gambols he did play,
 Until he came unto the Wash
 Of Edmonton so gay ;

And there he threw the Wash about,
 On both sides of the way,
 Just like unto a trundling mop,
 Or a wild goose at play.

At Edmonton, his loving wife
 From the balcony spied
 Her tender husband, wondering much
 To see how he did ride.

“ Stop, stop, John Gilpin !—Here’s the house !’
 They all at once did cry ;
 “ The dinner waits, and we are tired :”—
 Said Gilpin—“ So am I !”

But yet his horse was not a whit
 Inclined to tarry there ;
 For why ?—his owner had a house
 Full ten miles off, at Ware.

So like an arrow swift he flew,
 Shot by an archer strong ;
 So did he fly—which brings me to
 The middle of my song.

Away went Gilpin out of breath,
 And sore against his will,
 Till at his friend the calender’s
 His horse at last stood still.

The calender, amazed to see
 His neighbour in such trim,
 Laid down his pipe, flew to the gate,
 And thus accosted him :

“ What news? what news? your tidings tell :
 Tell me you must and shall—
 Say why bareheaded you are come,
 Or why you come at all?”

Now Gilpin had a pleasant wit,
 And lov'd a timely joke ;
 And thus unto the calender
 In merry guise he spoke :

“ I came because your horse would come,
 And if I well forebode,
 My hat and wig will soon be here,
 They are upon the road.”

The calender right glad to find
 His friend in merry pin,
 Return'd him not a single word,
 But to the house went in :

Whence straight he came with hat and wig,
 A wig that flow'd behind,
 A hat not much the worse for wear,
 Each comely in its kind.

He held them up, and in his turn
 Thus show'd his ready wit :
 “ My head is twice as big as yours,
 They therefore needs must fit.

“ But let me scrape the dirt away
 That hangs upon your face,
 And stop and eat, for well you may
 Be in a hungry case.”

Said John, “ It is my wedding-day,
 And all the world would stare,
 If wife should dine at Edmonton,
 And I should dine at Ware.”

So turning to his horse, he said,
 “ I am in haste to dine ;
 ’Twas for your pleasure you came here,
 You shall go back for mine.”

Ah, luckless speech, and bootless boast !
 For which he paid full dear ;
 For, while he spake, a braying ass
 Did sing most loud and clear ;

Whereat his horse did snort, as he
 Had heard a lion roar,
 And galloped off with all his might,
 As he had done before.

Away went Gilpin, and away
 Went Gilpin’s hat and wig :
 He lost them sooner than at first ;
 For why?—they were too big.

Now Mistress Gilpin, when she saw
 Her husband posting down
 Into the country far away,
 She pulled out half-a-crown ;

And thus unto the youth she said
 That drove them to the Bell,
 " This shall be yours, when you bring back
 My husband safe and well."

The youth did ride, and soon did meet
 John coming back amain :
 Whom in a trice he tried to stop,
 By catching at his rein ;

But not performing what he meant,
 And gladly would have done,
 The frightened steed he frightened more,
 And made him faster run.

Away went Gilpin, and away
 Went postboy at his heels,
 The postboy's horse right glad to miss
 The lumbering of the wheels.

Six gentlemen upon the road,
 Thus seeing Gilpin fly,
 With postboy scampering in the rear,
 They raised the hue and cry :

" Stop thief ! stop thief !—a highwayman !"
 Not one of them was mute ;
 And all and each that passed that way
 Did join in the pursuit.

And now the turnpike gates again
 Flew open in short space ;
 The toll-men thinking, as before,
 That Gilpin rode a race.

And so he did, and won it too,
 For he got first to town ;
 Nor stopped till where he had got up
 He did again get down.

Now let us sing, Long live the king !
 And Gilpin, long live he !
 And when he next doth ride abroad
 May I be there to see !

ODE TO APOLLO.

ON AN INK-GLASS ALMOST DRIED IN THE SUN.

PATRON of all those luckless brains
 That, to the wrong side leaning,
 Indite much metre with much pains,
 And little or no meaning :

Ah why, since oceans, rivers, streams,
 That water all the nations,
 Pay tribute to thy glorious beams,
 In constant exhalations ;

Why, stooping from the noon of day,
 Too covetous of drink,
 Apollo, hast thou stolen away
 A poet's drop of ink ?

Upborne into the viewless air,
 It floats a vapour now,
 Impelled through regions dense and rare
 By all the winds that blow.

Ordained, perhaps, ere summer flies,
 Combined with millions more,
 To form an Iris in the skies,
 Though black and foul before.

Illustrious drop ! and happy then
 Beyond the happiest lot,
 Of all that ever passed my pen,
 So soon to be forgot !

Phœbus, if such be thy design,
 To place it in thy bow,
 Give wit, that what is left may shine
 With equal grace below.

THE YEARLY DISTRESS ;

OR, TITHING-TIME AT STOCK, IN ESSEX.

*Verses addressed to a country clergyman complaining of
 the disagreeableness of the day annually appointed for
 receiving the dues at the parsonage.*

COME, ponder well, for 'tis no jest,
 To laugh it would be wrong,
 The troubles of a worthy priest,
 The burthen of my song.

This priest he merry is and blithe
 Three quarters of a year,
 But oh ! it cuts him like a scythe
 When tithing-time draws near.

He then is full of frights and fears,
 As one at point to die,
 And long before the day appears
 He heaves up many a sigh.

For then the farmers come, jog, jog,
 Along the miry road,
 Each heart as heavy as a log,
 To make their payments good.

In sooth the sorrow of such days
 Is not to be express'd,
 When he that takes and he that pays
 Are both alike distress'd.

Now all unwelcome at his gates
 The clumsy swains alight,
 With rueful faces and bald pates ; --
 He trembles at the sight.

And well he may, for well he knows,
 Each bumpkin of the clan,
 Instead of paying what he owes,
 Will cheat him if he can.

So in they come—each makes his leg,
 And flings his head before,
 And looks as if he came to beg,
 And not to quit a score.

“ And how does miss and madam do,
 The little boy and all ? ”
 “ All tight and well. And how do you,
 Good Mr. What-d’ye-call ? ”

The dinner comes, and down they sit :
 Were e'er such hungry folk ?
 There's little talking, and no wit ;
 It is no time to joke.

One wipes his nose upon his sleeve,
 One spits upon the floor,
 Yet not to give offence or grieve,
 Holds up the cloth before.

The punch goes round, and they are dull
 And lumpish still as ever ;
 Like barrels with their bellies full,
 They only weigh the heavier.

At length the busy time begins.
 " Come, neighbours, we must wag,"—
 The money chinks, down drop their chins,
 Each lugging out his bag.

One talks of mildew and of frost,
 And one of storms of hail,
 And one of pigs that he has lost
 By maggots at the tail.

Quoth one, " A rarer man than you
 In pulpit none shall hear ;
 But yet methinks to tell you true,
 You sell it plaguy dear."

Oh, why were farmers made so coarse,
 Or clergy made so fine ?
 A kick that scarce would move a horse,
 May kill a sound divine.

Then let the boobies stay at home ;
 'Twould cost him, I dare say,
 Less trouble taking twice the sum
 Without the clowns that pay.

THE DISTRESSED TRAVELLERS ; OR, LABOUR IN VAIN.

A NEW SONG TO A TUNE NEVER SUNG BEFORE.

1.

I SING of a journey to Clifton
 We would have performed if we could,
 Without cart or barrow to lift on
 Poor Mary and me through the mud.
 Slee sla slud,
 Stuck in the mud,
 Oh, it is pretty to wade through a flood !

2.

So away we went, slipping and sliding,
 Hop, hop, *à la mode de deux* frogs,
 'Tis near as good walking as riding,
 When ladies are dressed in their clogs.
 Wheels, no doubt,
 Go briskly about,
 But they clatter and rattle, and make such a rout !

3.

SHE.

“ Well ! now I protest it is charming ;
How finely the weather improves !
That cloud, though, is rather alarming,
How slowly and stately it moves ! ”

HE.

“ Pshaw ! never mind,
'Tis not in the wind,
We are travelling south and shall leave it behind. ”

4.

SHE.

“ I am glad we are come for an airing,
For folks may be pounded and penned,
Until they grow rusty, not caring
To stir half a mile to an end. ”

HE.

“ The longer we stay,
The longer we may ;
It's a folly to think about weather or way. ”

5.

SHE.

“ But now I begin to be frightened ;
If I fall, what a way I should roll !
I am glad that the bridge was indicted,—
Stop ! stop ! I am sunk in a hole ! ”

HE.

“ Nay, never care !
'Tis a common affair ;
You'll not be the last that will set a foot there. ”

6.

SHE.

“ Let me breathe now a little, and ponder
On what it were better to do ;
That terrible lane I see yonder,
I think we shall never get through.”

HE.

“ So think I :—
But, by the by,
We never shall know, if we never should try.”

7.

SHE.

“ But should we get there, how shall we get home ?
What a terrible deal of bad road we have past !
Slipping and sliding ; and if we should come
To a difficult stile, I am ruin'd at last !
Oh, this lane ;
Now it is plain
That struggling and striving is labour in vain.”

8.

HE.

“ Stick fast there while I go and look—”

SHE.

“ Don't go away, for fear I should fall !”

HE.

“ I have examined it every nook,
And what you see here is a sample of all.
Come, wheel round,
The dirt we have found
Would be an estate at a farthing a pound.”

9.

Now, sister Anne, the guitar you must take,
 Set it, and sing it, and make it a song ;
 I have varied the verse for variety's sake,
 And cut it off short—because it was long.
 'Tis hobbling and lame,
 Which critics wont blame,
 For the sense and the sound, they say, should be the
 same.

ADDRESS TO TOBACCO.

OH Nymph of transatlantic fame,
 Where'er thine haunt, whate'er thy name,
 Whether reposing on the side
 Of Oroonoko's spacious tide,
 Or listening with delight not small
 To Niagara's distant fall,
 'Tis time to cherish and to feed
 The pungent nose-refreshing weed,
 Which, whether pulverised it gain
 A speedy passage to the brain,
 Or, whether, touch'd with fire, it rise
 In circling eddies to the skies,
 Does thought more quicken and refine
 Than all the breath of all the Nine—
 Forgive the bard, if bard he be,
 Who once too wantonly made free,
 To touch with a satiric wipe
 That symbol of thy power, the pipe ;

So may no blight infest thy plains
 And no unseasonable rains ;
 And so may smiling peace once more
 Visit America's sad shore ;
 And thou secure from all alarms,
 Of thundering drums and glittering arms,
 Rove unconfined beneath the shade
 Thy wide-expanded leaves have made :
 So may thy votaries increase,
 And fumigation never cease.
 May Newton with renew'd delights
 Perform thy odoriferous rites.
 While clouds of incense half divine
 Involve thy disappearing shrine :
 And so may smoke-inhaling Bull
 Be always filling, never full.

REPORT OF AN ADJUDGED CASE.

NOT TO BE FOUND IN ANY OF THE BOOKS.

BETWEEN Nose and Eyes a strange contest arose,
 The spectacles set them unhappily wrong ;
 The point in dispute was, as all the world knows,
 To which the said spectacles ought to belong.

So Tongue was the lawyer, and argued the cause
 With a great deal of skill, and a wig full of learning ;
 While Chief Baron Ear sat to balance the laws,
 So famed for his talent in nicely discerning.

“ In behalf of the Nose it will quickly appear,
 And your lordship,” he said, “ will undoubtedly find,
 That the Nose has had spectacles always in wear,
 Which amounts to possession time out of mind.”

Then holding the spectacles up to the court—
 “ Your lordship observes they are made with a straddle,
 As wide as the ridge of the Nose is ; in short,
 Designed to sit close to it, just like a saddle.

“ Again, would your lordship a moment suppose
 (’Tis a case that has happened, and may be again),
 That the visage or countenance had not a Nose,
 Pray who would, or who could, wear spectacles then ?

“ On the whole it appears, and my argument shows,
 With a reasoning the court will never condemn,
 That the spectacles plainly were made for the Nose,
 And the Nose was as plainly intended for them.”

Then shifting his side, as a lawyer knows how,
 He pleaded again in behalf of the Eyes :
 But what were his arguments few people know,
 For the court did not think they were equally wise.

So his lordship decreed with a grave solemn tone,
 Decisive and clear, without one if or but—
 That, whenever the Nose put his spectacles on,
 By daylight or candlelight—Eyes should be shut !

THE COLUBRIAD.

CLOSE by the threshold of a door nailed fast
 Three kittens sat ; each kitten looked aghast.
 I, passing swift and inattentive by,
 At the three kittens cast a careless eye ;
 Not much concerned to know what they did there ;
 Not deeming kittens worth a poet's care.
 But presently a loud and furious hiss
 Caused me to stop, and to exclaim, "What's this?"
 When lo ! upon the threshold met my view,
 With head erect, and eyes of fiery hue,
 A viper, long as Count de Grasse's queue,
 Forth from his head his forked tongue he throws,
 Darting it full against a kitten's nose ;
 Who having never seen, in field or house,
 The like, sat still and silent as a mouse ;
 Only projecting, with attention due,
 Her whiskered face, she asked him, "Who are
 you?"
 On to the hall went I, with pace not slow,
 But swift as lightning, for a long Dutch hoe :
 With which well armed I hastened to the spot,
 To find the viper, but I found him not.
 And turning up the leaves and shrubs around,
 Found only that he was not to be found.
 But still the kittens, sitting as before,
 Sat watching close the bottom of the door.
 'I hope," said I, "the villain I would kill
 Has slipped between the door and the door-sill ;
 And if I make despatch, and follow hard,
 No doubt but I shall find him in the yard :"

For long ere now it should have been rehearsed,
 'Twas in the garden that I found him first.
 E'en there I found him, there the full-grown cat
 His head, with velvet paw, did gently pat ;
 As curious as the kittens erst had been
 To learn what this phenomenon might mean
 Filled with heroic ardour at the sight,
 And fearing every moment he would bite,
 And rob our household of our only cat
 That was of age to combat with a rat,
 With outstretched hoe I slew him at the door,
 And taught him NEVER TO COME THERE NO MORE.

August 1782.

THE DOG AND THE WATER LILY.

NO FABLE.

THE noon was shady, and soft airs
 Swept Ouse's silent tide,
 When, 'scaped from literary cares,
 I wandered on his side.

My spaniel, prettiest of his race,
 And high in pedigree
 (Two nymphs adorned with every grace
 That spaniel found for me),

Now wantoned, lost in flags and reeds,
 Now starting into sight,
 Pursued the swallow o'er the meads
 With scarce a slower flight.

It was the time when Ouse displayed
 His lilies newly blown ;
 Their beauties I intent surveyed
 And one I wished my own.

With cane extended far, I sought
 To steer it close to land ;
 But still the prize, though nearly caught,
 Escaped my eager hand.

Beau marked my unsuccessful pains
 With fixed considerate face,
 And puzzling set his puppy brains
 To comprehend the case.

But with a chirrup clear and strong
 Dispersing all his dream,
 I thence withdrew, and followed long
 The windings of the stream.

My ramble ended, I returned ;
 Beau, trotting far before,
 The floating wreath again discerned,
 And plunging left the shore.

I saw him with that lily cropped
 Impatient swim to meet
 My quick approach, and soon he dropped
 The treasure at my feet.

Charmed with the sight, "The world," I cried,
 " Shall hear of this thy deed :
 My dog shall mortify the pride
 Of man's superior breed :

But chief myself I will enjoin,
 Awake at duty's call,
 To show a love as prompt as thine
 To Him who gives me all."

ON A SPANIEL, CALLED "BEAU,"

KILLING A YOUNG BIRD.

A SPANIEL, Beau, that fares like you,
 Well fed, and at his ease,
 Should wiser be than to pursue
 Each trifle that he sees.

But you have killed a tiny bird
 Which flew not till to-day,
 Against my orders, whom you heard
 Forbidding you the prey.

Nor did you kill that you might eat
 And ease a doggish pain ;
 For him, though chased with furious heat,
 You left where he was slain.

Nor was he of the thievish sort,
 Or one whom blood allures,
 But innocent was all his sport
 Whom you have torn for yours.

My dog ! what remedy remains,
 Since, teach you all I can,
 I see you, after all my pains,
 So much resemble man ?

BEAU'S REPLY.

Sir, when I flew to seize the bird
 In spite of your command,
 A louder voice than yours I heard,
 And harder to withstand.

You cried, "Forbear!"—but in my breast
 A mightier cried, "Proceed!"—
 'Twas Nature, sir, whose strong behest
 Impelled me to the deed.

Yet much as Nature I respect,
 I ventured once to break
 (As you perhaps may recollect)
 Her precept for your sake ;

And when your linnet on a day,
 Passing his prison door,
 Had fluttered all his strength away
 And panting pressed the floor,

Well knowing him a sacred thing,
 Not destined to my tooth,
 I only kissed his ruffled wing,
 And licked the feathers smooth.

Let my obedience then excuse
 My disobedience now,
 Nor some reproof yourself refuse
 From your aggrieved Bow-wow ;

If killing birds be such a crime
 (Which I can hardly see),
 What think you, sir, of killing Time
 With verse addressed to me?

EPITAPH ON A HARE.

HERE lies, whom hound did ne'er pursue,
 Nor swifter greyhound follow,
 Whose foot ne'er tainted morning dew,
 Nor ear heard huntsman's halloo ;

Old Tiney, surliest of his kind,
 Who, nursed with tender care,
 And to domestic bounds confined,
 Was still a wild Jack hare.

Though duly from my hand he took
 His pittance every night,
 He did it with a jealous look,
 And, when he could, would bite.

His diet was of wheaten bread,
 And milk, and oats, and straw ;
 Thistles, or lettuces instead,
 With sand to scour his maw

On twigs of hawthorn he regaled,
 On pippins' russet peel,
 And, when his juicy salads failed,
 Sliced carrot pleased him well.

A Turkey carpet was his lawn,
 Whereon he loved to bound,
 To skip and gambol like a fawn,
 And swing his rump around.

His frisking was at evening hours,
For then he lost his fear,
But most before approaching showers,
Or when a storm drew near.

Eight years and five round-rolling moons
He thus saw steal away,
Dozing out all his idle noons,
And every night at play.

I kept him for his humour's sake,
For he would oft beguile
My heart of thoughts that made it ache,
And force me to a smile.

But now beneath this walnut shade
He finds his long last home,
And waits, in snug concealment laid,
Till gentler Puss shall come.

He, still more aged, feels the shocks
From which no care can save,
And, partner once of Tiney's box,
Must soon partake his grave.

EPITAPHIUM ALTERUM.

HIC etiam jacet,
 Qui totum novennium vixit,
 Puss.
 Siste paulisper,
 Qui præteriturus es,
 Et tecum sic reputa—
 Hunc neque canis venaticus,
 Nec plumbum missile,
 Nec laqueus,
 Nec imbres nimii,
 Confecêre :
 Tamen mortuus est—
 Et moriar ego.

PAIRING TIME ANTICIPATED.¹

A FABLE.

I SHALL not ask Jean Jacques Rousseau
 If birds confabulate or no ;
 'Tis clear that they were always able
 To hold discourse, at least in fable ;

¹ It was one of the whimsical speculations of this philosopher that all fables which ascribe reason and speech to animals should be withheld from children, as being only vehicles of deception. But what child was ever deceived by them, or can be, against the evidence of his senses?

And even the child who knows no better
 Than to interpret by the letter
 A story of a cock and bull,
 Must have a most uncommon skull.

It chanced then on a winter's day,
 But warm and bright and calm as May,
 The birds, conceiving a design
 To forestall sweet St. Valentine,
 In many an orchard, copse, and grove,
 Assembled on affairs of love,
 And with much twitter and much chatter
 Began to agitate the matter.

At length a Bullfinch, who could boast
 More years and wisdom than the most,
 Entreated, opening wide his beak,
 A moment's liberty to speak ;
 And, silence publicly enjoined,
 Delivered briefly thus his mind :

“ My friends ! be cautious how ye treat
 The subject upon which we meet ;
 I fear we shall have winter yet.”

A Finch, whose tongue knew no control,
 With golden wing and satin poll,
 A last year's bird, who ne'er had tried
 What marriage means, thus pert replied :

“ Methinks the gentleman,” quoth she,

“ Opposite in the apple-tree,
 By his good will would keep us single
 Till yonder heaven and earth shall mingle ;
 Or (which is likelier to befall)
 Till death exterminate us all.

I marry without more ado ;
 My dear Dick Redcap, what say you ?”

Dick heard, and tweedling, ogling, bridling,
 Turning short round, strutting, and sideling,

Attested, glad, his approbation
 Of an immediate conjugation.
 Their sentiments so well express'd
 Influenced mightily the rest ;
 All pair'd, and each pair built a nest.

But though the birds were thus in haste,
 The leaves came on not quite so fast,
 And destiny, that sometimes bears
 An aspect stern on man's affairs,
 Not altogether smiled on theirs.
 The wind, of late breathed gently forth,
 Now shifted east, and east by north ;
 Bare trees and shrubs but ill, you know,
 Could shelter them from rain or snow :
 Stepping into their nests they paddled,
 Themselves were chill'd, their eggs were addled ;
 Soon every father bird and mother
 Grew quarrelsome, and peck'd each other,
 Parted without the least regret,
 Except that they had ever met,
 And learned in future to be wiser
 Than to neglect a good adviser.

MORAL.

Misses ! the tale that I relate
 This lesson seems to carry—
 Choose not alone a proper mate,
 But proper time to marry.

AN EPITAPH.

HERE lies one who never drew
 Blood himself, yet many slew ;
 Gave the gun its aim, and figure
 Made in field, yet ne'er pulled trigger.
 Armed men have gladly made
 Him their guide, and him obeyed ;
 At his signified desire,
 Would advance, present, and fire.
 Stout he was, and large of limb,
 Scores have fled at sight of him !
 And to all this fame he rose
 Only following his nose.
 Neptune was he called ; not he
 Who controls the boisterous sea,
 But of happier command,
 Neptune of the furrowed land ;
 And, your wonder vain to shorten,
Pointer to Sir John Throckmorton.

A TALE.¹

IN Scotland's realm, where trees are few,
 Nor even shrubs abound ;
 But where, however bleak the view,
 Some better things are found :

For husband there and wife may boast
 Their union undefiled,
 And false ones are as rare almost
 As hedge-rows in the wild :

In Scotland's realm forlorn and bare
 This history chanced of late,--
 This history of a wedded pair,
 A chaffinch and his mate.

The spring drew near, each felt a breast
 With genial instinct filled ;
 They paired, and would have built a nest,
 But found not where to build.

¹ This tale is founded on an article of intelligence which the author found in the *Buckinghamshire Herald* for Saturday, June 1, 1793, in the following words :—

“*Glasgow, May 23.*”

“In a block, or pulley, near the head of the mast of a gabbert, now lying at the Broomielaw, there is a chaffinch's nest and four eggs. The nest was built while the vessl lay at Greenock, and was followed hither by both birds. Though the block is occasionally lowered for the inspection of the curious, the birds have not forsaken the nest. The cock, however, visits the nest but seldom ; while the hen never leaves it but when she descends to the hull for food.”

The heaths uncovered and the moors
 Except with snow and sleet,
 Sea-beaten rocks and naked shores,
 Could yield them no retreat.

Long time a breeding-place they sought,
 Till both grew vexed and tired ;
 At length a ship arriving brought
 The good so long desired.

A ship !—could such a restless thing
 Afford them place of rest ?
 Or was the merchant charged to bring
 The homeless birds a nest ?

Hush ?—silent hearers profit most,—
 This racer of the sea
 Proved kinder to them than the coast,
 It served them with a tree.

But such a tree ! 'twas shaven deal,
 The tree they call a mast,
 And had a hollow with a wheel
 Through which the tackle passed.

Within that cavity aloft
 Their roofless home they fixed,
 Form'd with materials neat and soft,
 Bents, wool, and feathers mixed.

Four ivory eggs soon pave its floor,
 With russet specks bedight ;
 The vessel weighs, forsakes the shore,
 And lessens to the sight.

The mother-bird is gone to sea
 As she had changed her kind ;
 But goes the male ? Far wiser, he
 Is doubtless left behind.

No—soon as from ashore he saw
 The wingèd mansion move,
 He flew to reach it, by a law
 Of never-failing love ;

Then perching at his consort's side,
 Was briskly borne along,
 The billows and the blast defied,
 And cheer'd her with a song.

The seaman with sincere delight
 His feather'd shipmates eyes,
 Scarce less exulting in the sight
 Than when he tows a prize.

For seamen much believe in signs,
 And from a chance so new
 Each some approaching good divines,
 And may his hopes be true !

Hail, honour'd land ! a desert where
 Not even birds can hide,
 Yet parent of this loving pair
 Whom nothing could divide.

And ye who, rather than resign
 Your matrimonial plan,
 Were not afraid to plough the brine
 In company with man ;

For whose lean country much disdain
 We English often show ;
 Yet from a richer nothing gain
 But wantonness and woe ;

Be it your fortune, year by year,
 The same resource to prove,
 And may ye sometimes landing here,
 Instruct us how to love !

THE FAITHFUL BIRD.

THE greenhouse is my summer seat ;
 My shrubs displaced from that retreat
 Enjoyed the open air ;
 Two goldfinches, whose sprightly song
 Had been their mutual solace long,
 Lived happy prisoners there.

They sang as blithe as finches sing
 That flutter loose on golden wing,
 And frolic where they list ;
 Strangers to liberty, 'tis true,
 But that delight they never knew,
 And therefore never missed.

But nature works in every breast,
 With force not easily suppressed ;
 And Dick felt some desires,

That, after many an effort vain,
 Instructed him at length to gain
 A pass between his wires.

The open window seemed to invite
 The freeman to a farewell flight ;
 But Tom was still confined ;
 And Dick, although his way was clear,
 Was much too generous and sincere
 To leave his friend behind.

So settling on his cage, by play,
 And chirp, and kiss, he seemed to say,
 “ You must not live alone ; ”—
 Nor would he quit that chosen stand
 Till I, with slow and cautious hand,
 Returned him to his own.

O ye, who never taste the joys
 Of friendship, satisfied with noise,
 Fandango, ball, and rout !
 Blush when I tell you how a bird
 A prison with a friend preferred
 To liberty without.

THE NIGHTINGALE AND GLOWWORM.

A NIGHTINGALE, that all day long
 Hath cheer'd the village with his song,
 Nor yet at eve his note suspended,
 Nor yet when eventide was ended,

Began to feel, as well he might,
 The keen demands of appetite ;
 When, looking eagerly around,
 He spied far off, upon the ground,
 A something shining in the dark,
 And knew the glowworm by his spark ;
 So stooping down from hawthorn top,
 He thought to put him in his crop.
 The worm, aware of his intent,
 Harangued him thus, right eloquent :—
 “ Did you admire my lamp,” quoth he,
 “ As much as I your minstrelsy,
 You would abhor to do me wrong,
 As much as I to spoil your song ;
 For ’twas the self-same power Divine
 Taught you to sing, and me to shine,
 That you with music, I with light,
 Might beautify and cheer the night.”
 The songster heard his short oration,
 And, warbling out his approbation,
 Released him, as my story tells,
 And found a supper somewhere else.

Hence jarring sectaries may learn
 Their real interest to discern ;
 That brother should not war with brother,
 And worry and devour each other ;
 But sing and shine with sweet consent,
 Till life’s poor transient night is spent,
 Respecting in each other’s case
 The gifts of nature and of grace.

Those Christians best deserve the name,
 Who studiously make peace their aim ;
 Peace both the duty and the prize
 Of him that creeps and him that flies.

MISCELLANEOUS.

THE PROGRESS OF POETRY.

AGES elapsed ere Homer's lamp appeared,
And ages ere the Mantuan Swan was heard ;
To carry nature lengths unknown before,
To give a Milton birth, asked ages more.
Thus Genius rose and set at ordered times,
And shot a day-spring into distant climes ;
Ennobling every region that he chose,
He sunk in Greece, in Italy he rose,
And, tedious years of Gothic darkness past,
Emerged all splendour in our isle at last.
Thus lovely halcyons dive into the main,
Then show far off their shining plumes again.

These were the chief ; each interval of night
Was graced with many an undulating light ;
In less illustrious bards his beauty shone
A meteor or a star ; in these, the sun.

The nightingale may claim the topmost bough,
While the poor grasshopper must chirp below.
Like him unnoticed, I, and such as I,
Spread little wings, and rather skip than fly ;
Perched on the meagre produce of the land,
An ell or two of prospect we command,
But never peep beyond the thorny bound,
Or oaken fence, that hems the paddock round.

In Eden, ere yet innocence of heart
Had faded, poetry was not an art ;

Language above all teaching, or if taught,
Only by gratitude and glowing thought,—
Elegant as simplicity, and warm
As ecstasy, unmanacled by form,—
Not prompted, as in our degenerate days,
By low ambition and the thirst of praise,
Was natural as is the flowing stream,
And yet magnificent, a God the theme.
That theme on earth exhausted, though above
'Tis found as everlasting as His love,
Man lavished all his thoughts on human things,
The feats of heroes and the wrath of kings,
But still while virtue kindled his delight,
The song was moral, and so far was right.
'Twas thus till luxury seduced the mind
To joys less innocent, as less refined,
Then genius danced a bacchanal, he crowned
The brimming goblet, seized the thyrsus, bound
His brows with ivy, rushed into the field
Of wild imagination, and there reeled,
The victim of his own lascivious fires,
And, dizzy with delight, profaned the sacred wires.
Anacreon, Horace, played in Greece and Rome
This Bedlam part ; and, others nearer home.
When Cromwell fought for power, and while he
 reigned
The proud Protector of the power he gained,
Religion harsh, intolerant, austere,
Parent of manners like herself severe,
Drew a rough copy of the Christian face
Without the smile, the sweetness, or the grace ;
The dark and sullen humour of the time
Judged every effort of the Muse a crime ;
Verse in the finest mould of fancy cast,
Was lumber in an age so void of taste :

But when the second Charles assumed the way,
And arts revived beneath a softer day,
Then like a bow long forced into a curve,
The mind, released from too constrained a nerve,
Flew to its first position with a spring
That made the vaulted roofs of pleasure ring.
His court, the dissolute and hateful school
Of wantonness, where vice was taught by rule,
Swarmed with a scribbling herd as deep inlaid
With brutal lust as ever Circe made.
From these a long succession in the rage
Of rank obscenity debauched their age,
Nor ceased, till, ever anxious to redress
The abuses of her sacred charge, the press,
The Muse instructed a well-nurtured train
Of abler votaries to cleanse the stain,
And claim the palm for purity of song,
That lewdness had usurped and worn so long.
Then decent pleasantry and sterling sense,
That neither gave nor would endure offence,
Whipped out of sight, with satire just and keen,
The puppy pack that had defiled the scene.

In front of these came Addison. In him
Humour, in holiday and slightly trim,
Sublimity and Attic taste combined,
To polish, furnish, and delight the mind.
Then Pope, as harmony itself exact,
In verse well-disciplined, complete, compact,
Gave virtue and morality a grace
That, quite eclipsing pleasure's painted face,
Levied a tax of wonder and applause,
Even on the fools that trampled on their laws.
But he (his musical finesse was such,
So nice his ear, so delicate his touch)
Made poetry a mere mechanic art,

And every warbler has his tune by heart.
Nature imparting her satiric gift,
Her serious mirth, to Arbuthnot and Swift,
With droll sobriety they raised a smile
At folly's cost, themselves unmoved the while,
That constellation set, the world in vain
Must hope to look upon their like again

Table-Talk.

POETIC INSPIRATION.

NATURE, exerting an unwearied power,
Forms, opens, and gives scent to every flower ;
Spreads the fresh verdure of the field, and leads
The dancing Naiads through the dewy meads ;
She fills profuse ten thousand little throats
With music, modulating all their notes,
And charms the woodland scenes and wilds unknown,
With artless airs and concerts of her own ;
But seldom (as if fearful of expense)
Vouchsafes to man a poet's just pretence—
Fervency, freedom, fluency of thought,
Harmony, strength, words exquisitely sought ;
Fancy, that from the bow that spans the sky
Brings colours, dipp'd in heaven, that never die ;
A soul exalted above earth ; a mind
Skill'd in the characters that form mankind ;
And, as the sun, in rising beauty dress'd,
Looks to the westward from the dappled east,

And marks, whatever clouds may interpose
Ere yet his race begins, its glorious close,
An eye like his to catch the distant goal,
Or, ere the wheels of verse begin to roll,
Like his to shed illuminating rays
On every scene and subject it surveys,
Thus graced, the man assert's a poet's name,
And the world cheerfully admits the claim.

Pity Religion has so seldom found
A skilful guide into poetic ground !
The flowers would spring where'er she deign'd to
stray,

And every Muse attend her in her way.
Virtue indeed meets many a rhyming friend,
And many a compliment politely penn'd ;
But, unattired in that becoming vest
Religion weaves for her, and half undress'd,
Stands in the desert, shivering and forlorn,
A wintry figure, like a wither'd thorn.
The shelves are full, all other themes are sped,
Hackney'd and worn to the last flimsy thread ;
Satire has long since done his best, and curst
And loathsome ribaldry has done his worst ;
Fancy has sported all her powers away
In tales, in trifles, and in children's play ;
And 'tis the sad complaint, and almost true,
Whate'er we write, we bring forth nothing new.
'Twere new indeed, to see a bard all fire,
Touch'd with a coal from Heaven, assume the lyre,
And tell the world, still kindling as he sung,
With more than mortal music on his tongue,
That He, who died below, and reigns above,
Inspires the song, and that His name is Love.

Table-Talk.

AN EPISTLE TO JOSEPH HILL.¹

DEAR Joseph—five-and-twenty years ago—
 Alas, how time escapes !—'tis even so—
 With frequent intercourse, and always sweet,
 And always friendly, we were wont to cheat
 A tedious hour—and now we never meet !
 As some grave gentleman in Terence says
 ('Twas therefore much the same in ancient days),
 Good lack, we know not what to-morrow brings—
 Strange fluctuation of all human things !
 True. Changes will befall, and friends may part,
 But distance only cannot change the heart :
 And, were I call'd to prove the assertion true,
 One proof should serve—a reference to you.

Whence comes it then, that in the wane of life,
 Though nothing have occur'd to kindle strife,
 We find the friends we fancied we had won,
 Though numerous once, reduced to few or none ?
 Can gold grow worthless that has stood the touch ?
 No ; gold they seem'd, but they were never such.

Horatio's servant once, with bow and cringe,
 Swinging the parlour door upon its hinge,
 Dreading a negative, and overawed
 Lest he should trespass, begg'd to go abroad.
 " Go, fellow !—whither ?"—turning short about—
 " Nay—stay at home—you're always going out."
 " 'Tis but a step, sir, just at the street's end."
 " For what ?"—" An' please you, sir, to see a friend."
 " A friend !" Horatio cried, and seem'd to start—

¹ An early friend of Cowper's, who introduced him to Thurlow
 He was made the Chancellor's Secretary.

“ Yea, marry shalt thou, and with all my heart.
And fetch my cloak ; for though the night be raw,
I’ll see him too—the first I ever saw.”

I knew the man, and knew his nature mild,
And was his plaything often when a child ;
But somewhat at that moment pinch’d him close,
Else he was seldom bitter or morose :
Perhaps, his confidence just then betray’d,
His grief might prompt him with the speech he made ;
Perhaps ’twas mere good humour gave it birth,
The harmless play of pleasantry and mirth.
Howe’er it was, his language in my mind,
Bespoke at least a man that knew mankind.

But not to moralise too much, and strain
To prove an evil of which all complain
(I hate long arguments verbosely spun),
One story more, dear Hill, and I have done.
Once on a time, an emperor, a wise man,
No matter where, in China or Japan,
Decreed, that whosoever should offend
Against the well-known duties of a friend,
Convicted once, should ever after wear
But half a coat, and show his bosom bare :
The punishment importing this, no doubt,
That all was nought within, and all found out.

O happy Britain ! we have not to fear
Such hard and arbitrary measure here ;
Else, could a law like that which I relate
Once have the sanction of our triple state,
Some few that I have known in days of old,
Would run most dreadful risk of catching cold ;
While you, my friend, whatever wind should blow,
Might traverse England safely to and fro,
An honest man, close buttoned to the chin,
Broadcloth without, and a warm beat within.

TO THE REV. WILLIAM CAWTHORNE
UNWIN.

UNWIN, I should but ill repay
The kindness of a friend,
Whose worth deserves as warm a lay
As ever friendship penned,
Thy name omitted in a page
That would reclaim a vicious age.

A union formed, as mine with thee,
Not rashly or in sport,
May be as fervent in degree,
And faithful in its sort,
And may as rich in comfort prove,
As that of true fraternal love.

The bud inserted in the rind,
The bud of peach or rose,
Adorns, though differing in its kind,
The stock whereon it grows,
With flower as sweet or fruit as fair
As if produced by nature there.

Not rich, I render what I may,
I seize thy name in haste,
And place it in this first assay,
Lest this should prove the last.
'Tis where it should be—in a plan
That holds in view the good of man.

The poet's lyre, to fix his fame,
Should be the poet's heart ;
Affection lights a brighter flame
Than ever blazed by art.
No muses on these lines attend,
I sink the poet in the friend.

VERSES TO THE MEMORY OF DR.
LLOYD,¹ OF WESTMINSTER SCHOOL.

SPOKEN AT THE WESTMINSTER ELECTION NEXT
AFTER HIS DECEASE.

OUR good old friend is gone, gone to his rest,
Whose social converse was itself a feast,
O ye of riper years, who recollect
How once ye loved and eyed him with respect,
Both in the firmness of his better day,
While yet he ruled you with a father's sway,
And when impair'd by time, and glad to rest,
Yet still with looks in mild complacence drest,
He took his annual seat, and mingled here
His sprightly vein with yours,—now drop a tear.
In morals blameless as in manners meek,
He knew no wish that he might blush to speak,
But, happy in whatever state below,
And richer than the rich in being so,

¹ Translated from the Latin verses then spoken, of which Cowper says, "Their elegance will sufficiently recommend them to persons of classical taste and erudition."

Obtain'd the hearts of all, and such a meed
At length from one, as made him rich indeed.
Hence, then, ye titles, hence, not wanted here !
Go, garnish merit in a higher sphere,
The brows of those, whose more exalted lot
He could congratulate, but envied not.
Light lie the turf, good senior, on thy breast !
And tranquil as thy mind was, be thy rest,
Though, living, thou hadst more desert than fame,
And not a stone now chronicles thy name.

ON THE PROMOTION OF EDWARD
THURLOW, ESQ.,

TO THE LORD HIGH CHANCELLORSHIP OF ENGLAND.

ROUND Thurlow's head in early youth,
And in his sportive days,
Fair Science poured the light of truth,
And Genius shed his rays.

“ See ! ” with united wonder cried
The experienced and the sage,
“ Ambition in a boy supplied
With all the skill of age !

“ Discernment, eloquence, and grace
Proclaim him born to sway
The balance in the highest place,
And bear the palm away.”

The praise bestowed was just and wise ;
He sprang impetuous forth,
Secure of conquest where the prize
Attends superior worth.

So the best courser on the plain
Ere yet he starts is known,
And does but at the goal obtain
What all had deemed his own.

1779.

TO WARREN HASTINGS, ESQ.

BY AN OLD SCHOOLFELLOW OF HIS AT WESTMINSTER.

HASTINGS ! I knew thee young, and of a mind
While young, humane, conversable, and kind ;
Nor can I well believe thee, gentle then,
Now grown a villain, and the worst of men :
But rather some suspect, who have oppress'd
And worried thee, as not themselves the best.

SONNET TO WILLIAM WILBERFORCE,
ESQ.

THY country, Wilberforce, with just disdain,
Hears thee by cruel men and impious call'd
Fanatic, for thy zeal to loose the enthrall'd
From exile, public sale, and slavery's chain.
Friend of the poor, the wrong'd, the fetter-gall'd,
Fear not lest labour such as thine be vain.

Thou hast achieved a part ; hast gain'd the ear
Of Britain's senate to thy glorious cause ;
Hope smiles, joy springs, and, though cold caution pause
And weave delay, the better hour is near
That shall remunerate thy toils severe
By peace for Afric, fenced with British laws.

Enjoy what thou hast won, esteem and love
From all the just on earth, and all the blest above.

April 1792.

Lines Composed for a Memorial
of Ashley Cowper, Esq.,

Immediately after his death, by his nephew
William of Weston.

FAREWELL ! endued with all that could engage
All hearts to love thee, both in youth and age !
In prime of life, for sprightliness enrolled
Among the gay, yet virtuous as the old ;

In life's last stage (O blessing rarely found !),
Pleasant as youth with all its blossoms crowned,
Through every period of this changeful state
Unchanged thyself—wise, good, affectionate !

Marble may flatter, and lest this should seem
O'ercharged with praises on so dear a theme,
Although thy worth be more than half supprest,
Love shall be satisfied, and veil the rest.

June 1788.

SONNET ADDRESSED TO HENRY
COWPER, ESQ.,

*On his emphatical and interesting delivery of the defence
of Warren Hastings, Esq., in the House of Lords.*

COWPER, whose silver voice, tasked sometimes hard,
Legends prolix delivers in the ears
(Attentive when thou readest) of England's peers,
Let verse at length yield thee thy just reward.

Thou wast not heard with drowsy disregard,
Expendng late on all that length of plea
Thy generous powers ; but silence honoured thee,
Mute as e'er gazed on orator or bard.

Thou art not voice alone, but hast beside
Both heart and head ; and couldst with music sweet
Of Attic phrase and senatorial tone,
Like thy renowned forefathers, far and wide
Thy fame diffuse, praised not for utterance meet
Of *others'* speech, but magic of *thy own*.

EPITAPH ON DR. JOHNSON.

HERE Johnson lies, a sage by all allowed,
Whom to have bred may well make England proud ;
Whose prose was eloquence, by wisdom taught,
The graceful vehicle of virtuous thought ;
Whose verse may claim, grave, masculine, and strong,
Superior praise to the mere poet's song ;
Who many a noble gift from Heaven possessed,
And faith at last, alone worth all the rest.
O man, immortal by a double prize,
By fame on earth, by glory in the skies !

ON THE LOSS OF THE ROYAL GEORGE.

WRITTEN WHEN THE NEWS ARRIVED.

TOLL for the brave !
The brave that are no more !
All sunk beneath the wave,
Fast by their native shore !

Eight hundred of the brave,
Whose courage well was tried,
Had made the vessel heel,
And laid her on her side.

A land-breeze shook the shrouds,
And she was over-set ;
Down went the Royal George,
With all her crew complete.

Toll for the brave !
Brave Kempenfelt is gone ;
His last sea-fight is fought ;
His work of glory done.

It was not in the battle ;
No tempest gave the shock ;
She sprang no fatal leak ;
She ran upon no rock.

His sword was in its sheath ;
His fingers held the pen,
When Kempenfelt went down
With twice four hundred men.

Weigh the vessel up,
Once dreaded by our foes !
And mingle with our cup
The tear that England owes.

Her timbers yet are sound,
And she may float again
Full charged with England's thunder,
And plough the distant main.

But Kempenfelt is gone,
His victories are o'er ;
And he and his eight hundred
Shall plough the wave no more.

ON OBSERVING SOME NAMES OF
LITTLE NOTE

RECORDED IN THE "BIOGRAPHIA BRITANNICA."

OH, fond attempt to give a deathless lot
To names ignoble, born to be forgot !
In vain, recorded in historic page,
They court the notice of a future age :
Those twinkling tiny lustres of the land
Drop one by one from Fame's neglecting hand ;
Lethæan gulfs receive them as they fall,
And dark oblivion soon absorbs them all.

So when a child (as playful children use)
Has burnt to tinder a stale last-year's news,
The flame extinct, he views the roving fire—
There goes my lady, and there goes the squire,
There goes the parson, oh illustrious spark !
And there, scarce less illustrious, goes the clerk !

THE ROSE.

THE rose had been washed, just washed in a shower,
Which Mary to Anna conveyed,
The plentiful moisture encumbered the flower,
And weighed down its beautiful head.

The cup was all filled, and the leaves were all wet,
And it seemed, to a fanciful view,
To weep for the buds it had left with regret
On the flourishing bush where it grew.

I hastily seized it, unfit as it was
For a nosegay, so dripping and drowned ;
And swinging it rudely, too rudely, alas !
I snapped it—it fell to the ground.

“ And such,” I exclaimed, “ is the pitiless part
Some act by the delicate mind,
Regardless of wringing and breaking a heart
Already to sorrow resigned !

“ This elegant rose, had I shaken it less,
Might have bloomed with its owner awhile ;
And the tear that is wiped with a little address
May be followed perhaps by a smile.”

THE POPLAR FIELD.

THE poplars are fell'd ; farewell to the shade,
And the whispering sound of the cool colonnade !
The winds play no longer and sing in the leaves,
Nor Ouse on his bosom their image receives.

Twelve years have elapsed since I first took a view
Of my favourite field, and the bank where they grew ;
And now in the grass behold they are laid,
And the tree is my seat that once lent me a shade !

The blackbird has fled to another retreat,
Where the hazels afford him a screen from the heat,
And the scene where his melody charm'd me before
Resounds with his sweet-flowing ditty no more.

My fugitive years are all hasting away,
And I must ere long lie as lowly as they,
With a turf on my breast, and a stone at my head,
Ere another such grove shall arise in its stead.

'Tis a sight to engage me, if anything can,
To muse on the perishing pleasures of man ;
Though his life be a dream, his enjoyments, I see,
Have a being less durable even than he.

BOADICEA.

AN ODE.

WHEN the British warrior queen,
Bleeding from the Roman rods,
Sought, with an indignant mien,
Counsel of her country's gods,

Sage beneath a spreading oak
Sat the Druid, hoary chief,
Every burning word he spoke
Full of rage and full of grief :

- “ Princess ! if our aged eyes
 Weep upon thy matchless wrongs,
’Tis because resentment ties
 All the terrors of our tongues.
- “ Rome shall perish,—write that word
 In the blood that she has spilt ;
Perish hopeless and abhorred,
 Deep in ruin as in guilt.
- “ Rome, for empire far renowned,
 Tramples on a thousand states ;
Soon her pride shall kiss the ground,—
 Hark ! the Gaul is at her gates.
- “ Other Romans shall arise,
 Heedless of a soldier’s name,
Sounds, not arms, shall win the prize,
 Harmony the path to fame.
- “ Then the progeny that springs
 From the forests of our land,
Armed with thunder, clad with wings,
 Shall a wider world command,
- “ Regions Cæsar never knew
 Thy posterity shall sway,
Where his eagles never flew,
 None invincible as they.”

Such the bard’s prophetic words,
 Pregnant with celestial fire,
Bending as he swept the chords
 Of his sweet but awful lyre.

She, with all a monarch's pride,
Felt them in her bosom glow,
Rushed to battle, fought and died,
Dying, hurled them at the foe.

‘ Ruffians, pitiless as proud,
Heaven awards the vengeance due ;
Empire is on us bestowed,
Shame and ruin wait for you.”

YARDLEY OAK.

SURVIVOR sole, and hardly such, of all
That once lived here, thy brethren !—at my birth
(Since which I number threescore winters past)
A shattered veteran, hollow-trunked perhaps,
As now, and with excoriate forks deform,
Relics of ages !—could a mind, imbued
With truth from Heaven, created thing adore,
I might with reverence kneel and worship thee.

It seems idolatry with some excuse,
When our forefather Druids in their oaks
Imagined sanctity. The conscience, yet
Unpurified by an authentic act
Of amnesty, the meed of blood divine,
Loved not the light, but, gloomy, into gloom
Of thickest shades, like Adam after taste
Of fruit proscribed, as to a refuge, fled.

Thou wast a bauble once ; a cup and ball,
Which babes might play with ; and the thievish jay,

Seeking her food, with ease might have purloined
The auburn nut that held thee, swallowing down
Thy yet close-folded latitude of boughs,
And all thine embryo vastness, at a gulp.
But fate thy growth decreed ; autumnal rains
Beneath thy parent tree mellowed the soil
Designed thy cradle ; and a skipping deer,
With pointed hoof dibbling the glebe, prepared
The soft receptacle, in which, secure,
Thy rudiments should sleep the winter through.

So fancy dreams. Disprove it, if ye can,
Ye reasoners broad awake, whose busy search
Of argument, employed too oft amiss,
Sifts half the pleasures of short life away !

Thou fell'st mature ; and in the loamy clod
Swelling with vegetative force instinct
Didst burst thine egg, as theirs the fabled Twins,
Now stars ; two lobes, protruding, paired exact ;
A leaf succeeded, and another leaf,
And, all the elements thy puny growth
Fostering propitious, thou becamest a twig.

Who lived when thou wast such ? Oh, couldst
thou speak,
As in Dodona once thy kindred trees
Oracular, I would not curious ask
The future, best unknown, but at thy mouth
Inquisitive, the less ambiguous past.

By thee I might correct, erroneous oft,
The clock of history, facts and events
Timing more punctual, unrecorded facts
Recovering, and misstated setting right—
Desperate attempt, till tree shall speak again !

Time made thee what thou wast, king of the woods,
And Time hath made thee what thou art—a cave
For owls to roost in. Once thy spreading boughs

O'erhung the champaign ; and the numerous flocks
That grazed it stood beneath that ample cope
Uncrowded, yet safe-sheltered from the storm.
No flock frequents thee now. Thou hast outlived
Thy popularity, and art become
(Unless verse rescue thee awhile) a thing
Forgotten, as the foliage of thy youth.

While thus through all the stages thou hast pushed
Of treeship—first a seedling, hid in grass ;
Then twig ; then sapling ; and, as century rolled
Slow after century, a giant-bulk
Of girth enormous, with moss-cushioned root
Upheaved above the soil, and sides embossed
With prominent wens globose,—till at the last
The rottenness, which Time is charged to inflict
On other mighty ones, found also thee.

What exhibitions various hath the world
Witnessed, of mutability in all
That we account most durable below !
Change is the diet on which all subsist,
Created changeable, and change at last
Destroys them. Skies uncertain, now the heat
Transmitting cloudless, and the solar beam
Now quenching in a boundless sea of clouds,—
Calm and alternate storm, moisture and drought,
Invigorate by turns the springs of life
In all that live, plant, animal, and man,
And in conclusion mar them. Nature's threads,
Fine passing thought, even in her coarsest works,
Delight in agitation, yet sustain
The force that agitates, not unimpaired ;
But, worn by frequent impulse, to the cause
Of their best tone their dissolution owe.

Thought cannot spend itself, comparing still
The great and little of thy lot, thy growth

From almost nullity into a state
Of matchless grandeur, and declension thence,
Slow, into such magnificent decay.
Time was when, settling on thy leaf, a fly
Could shake thee to the root—and time has been
When tempests could not. At thy firmest age
Thou hadst within thy bole solid contents,
That might have ribbed the sides and planked the deck
Of some flagged admiral; and tortuous arms,
The shipwright's darling treasure, didst present
To the four-quartered winds, robust and bold,
Warped into tough knee-timber, many a load!
But the axe spared thee. In those thrifter days
Oaks fell not, hewn by thousands, to supply
The bottomless demands of contest, waged
For senatorial honours. Thus to Time
The task was left to whittle thee away
With his sly scythe, whose ever-nibbling edge,
Noiseless, an atom and an atom more,
Disjoining from the rest, has, unobserved,
Achieved a labour, which had, far and wide,
By man perform'd, made all the forest ring.

Embowell'd now, and of thy ancient self
Possessing nought but the scoop'd rind, that seems
A huge throat calling to the clouds for drink,
Which it would give in rivulets to thy root,
Thou tempest none, but rather much forbid'st
The feller's toil, which thou couldst ill requite.
Yet is thy root sincere, sound as the rock.
A quarry of stout spurs, and knotted fangs,
Which, crook'd into a thousand whimsies, clasp
The stubborn soil, and hold thee still erect.

So stands a kingdom, whose foundation yet
Fails not in virtue, and in wisdom laid,
Though all the superstructure, by the tooth

Pulverised of venality, a shell
Stands now, and semblance only of itself !

Thine arms have left thee. Winds have rent
them off

Long since, and rovers of the forest wild
With bow and shaft have burnt them. Some have left
A splinter'd stump bleach'd to a snowy white ;
And some memorial none where once they grew.
Yet life still lingers in thee, and puts forth
Proof not contemptible of what she can,
Even where death predominates. The spring
Finds thee not less alive to her sweet force
Than yonder upstarts of the neighbouring wood,
So much thy juniors, who their birth received
Half a millennium since the date of thine.

But since, although well qualified by age
To teach, no spirit dwells in thee, nor voice
May be expected from thee, seated here
On thy distorted root, with hearers none,
Or prompter, save the scene, I will perform
Myself the oracle, and will discourse
In my own ear such matter as I may.
One man alone, the father of us all,
Drew not his life from woman : never gazed
With mute unconsciousness of what he saw
On all around him : learned not by degrees,
Nor ow'd articulation to his ear.
But, moulded by his Maker into man,
At once upstood intelligent, survey'd
All creatures with precision, understood
Their purport, uses, properties ; assigned
To each his name significant, and, filled
With love and wisdom, rendered back to Heaven
In praise harmonious the first air he drew.
He was excused the penalties of dull

Minority. No tutor charged his hand
With the thought-tracing quill, or tasked his mind
With problems. History, not wanted yet,
Leaned on her elbow, watching Time, whose course,
Eventful, should supply her with a theme.

1791.

INDEX OF FIRST LINES.

A Christian's wit is inoffensive light	100
"Adieu," Vinosa cries, ere yet he sips	120
Ages clapsed ere Homer's lamp appeared	205
All are not such. I had a brother once	113
All we behold is miracle, but seen	141
Almighty King ! whose wondrous hand	156
A nightingale, that all day long	201
Art thou a man professionally tied	130
A spaniel, Beau, that fares like you	189
Be it a weakness, it deserves some praise	131
Between Nose and Eyes a strange contest arose	184
Breathe from the gentle south, O Lord	157
But slighted as it is, and by the great	23
By whom was David taught	152
Close by the threshold of a door nailed fast	186
Come, Evening, once again, season of peace	57
Come, ponder well, for 'tis no jest	177
Cowper, whose silver voice, tasked sometimes hard	218
Dear Anna—between friend and friend	31
Dear Joseph—five-and-twenty years ago	210
Delia, the unkindest girl on earth	4
Descending now (but cautious lest too fast)	52
Doomed, as I am, in solitude to waste	10
Dubius is such a scrupulous good man	122
England, with all thy faults, I love thee still	79

	PAGE
Farewell ! endued with all that could engage	217
Farewell, false hearts ! whose best affections fail	35
Far from the world, O Lord, I flee	155
From school to Cam or Isis, and thence home	118
God moves in a mysterious way	158
Gray dawn appears ; the sportsman and his train	117
Hackney'd in business, wearied at that oar	144
Hark ! how it floats upon the dewy air	115
Hark, my soul ! it is the Lord	154
Hark ! 'tis the twanging horn ! O'er yonder bridge	25
Hastings ! I knew thee young, and of a mind	215
Hatred and vengeance,—my eternal portion	16
Hayley, thy tenderness fraternal, shown	41
Heaven speed the canvas, gallantly unfurled	82
He is the happy man, whose life even now	109
He lives who lives to God, alone	163
Here Johnson lies, a sage by all allowed	219
Here lies one who never drew	195
Here lies, whom hound did ne'er pursue	191
Here unmolested, through whatever sign	54
He who sits from day to day	161
Hic etiam jacet	193
How oft, my Delia, since our last farewell	9
How oft upon yon eminence our pace	49
How various his employments whom the world	19
If ever thou hast felt another's pain	137
I have loved the rural walk through lanes	20
I know the mind that feels indeed the fire	95
In him, Demosthenes was heard again	94
In Scotland's realm, where trees are few	197
I own I am shocked at the purchase of slaves	87
I pity kings whom worship waits upon	69
I saw the woods and fields at close of day	58
I shall not ask Jean Jacques Rousseau	193
I sing of a journey to Clifton	180
It happened on a solemn eventide	142
I venerate the man whose heart is warm	107
I was a stricken deer that left the herd	17
John Gilpin was a citizen	167
Just when our drawing-rooms begin to blaze	22

INDEX OF FIRST LINES.

233

PAGE

Let laurels, drenched in pure Parnassian dews	94
Leuconomus (beneath well-sounding Greek	99
Lovely indeed the mimic works of Art	55
Man views it and admires, but rests content	65
Mary! I want a lyre with other strings	40
Nature, exerting an unwearied power	208
Now from the roost, or from the neighbouring pale	63
Obscurest night involved the sky	44
Oh! bright occasions of dispensing good	93
Oh, fond attempt to give a deathless lot	221
Oh for a closer walk with God	151
Oh for a lodge in some vast wilderness	81
Oh happy shades! to me unblest	40
Oh Nymph of transatlantic fame	183
Oh that those lips had language! Life has passed	12
Oh 'tis a sight to be with joy perused	128
Our good old friend is gone, gone to his rest	213
Patriots have toil'd, and in their country's cause	73
Patron of all those luckless brains	176
Patron of else the most despised of men	101
Petronius! all the Muses weep for thee	96
Poor, yet industrious, modest, quiet, neat	59
Round Thurlow's head in early youth	214
So glide my life away! and so at last	30
Survivor sole, and hardly such, of all	225
Sweet is the harp of prophecy; too sweet	147
--Tell me, if you can, what power maintains	70
That ocean you of late surveyed	38
The Frenchman first in literary fame	98
The greenhouse is my summer seat	200
The Lord of all, Himself through all diffused	139
The Lord will happiness divine	153
The lover too shuns business and alarms	105
The night was winter in his roughest mood	63
The noon was shady, and soft airs	187

	PAGE
Then shame to manhood, and opprobrious more	76
The poplars are fell'd ; farewell to the shade	222
There is in souls a sympathy with sounds	132
The rose had been washed, just washed in a shower	221
These therefore I can pity, placed remote	85
The twentieth year is well-nigh past	42
This evening, Delia, you and I	6
Thy country, Wilberforce, with just disdain	216
'Tis morning ; and the sun with ruddy orb	61
'Tis not that I design to rob	11
'Tis pleasant through the loopholes of retreat	26
'Tis universal soldiership has stabbed	114
Toll for the brave	219
To rise at noon, sit slipshod and undressed	111
'Twas in the glad season of spring	88
Unwin, I should but ill repay	212
Virtuous and faithful HEBERDEN, whose skill	112
Weak and irresolute is man	159
Well,—one at least is safe. One shelter'd hare	30
We too are friends to loyalty. We love	78
Whence is it, that amazed I hear	39
When the British warrior queen	223
While thirteen moons saw smoothly run	160
William was once a bashful youth	3
Would my Delia know if I love, let her take	8
“Ye groves,” the statesman at his desk exclaims	102
Yon ancient prude, whose withered features show	96

THE END.

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